THE START POINT:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS OF TRIO
STUDENTS AT THE POINT OF ENTRY INTO A POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT
OR POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT PROGRAM

A Dissertation
by
ALICE BOGGS LENTZ

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Abstract

THE START POINT: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF ASPIRATIONS AND
NEEDS OF TRIO STUDENTS AT THE POINT OF ENTRY INTO A POSTSECONDARY
ENROLLMENT OR POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT PROGRAM

May 2013

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For almost 50 years, federally-funded TRIO programs in the United States have

served disadvantaged students to promote their postsecondary enrollment and postsecondary

degree attainment. TRIO is the set of federally-funded programs serving first-generation

college students, low-income students, students with disabilities, and other students to

support and facilitate their postsecondary enrollment or postsecondary degree attainment.

The purpose of this study was to examine the aspirations and needs of 94 students at their

point of entry into a TRIO program. Students' aspirations and needs were considered against

the purposes of the TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. legislation. Employing a grounded

theory research methodology, the researcher explored what students envision for their futures

at the start point of their TRIO experience and how the students' perspectives support the

purposes of TRIO programs. The major finding that emerged from the analysis of the

evolution of TRIO programs over their half-century of existence is the broadening and

extending of TRIO programs along five dimensions. These dimensions are the definition of

a disadvantaged student, the age ranges of TRIO participants, the levels of education where

TRIO programs operate, the targeted populations identified by TRIO programs, and the

increased accountability required of TRIO participants and TRIO programs. Four major

findings emerged from the analysis of statements that students wrote at the start point of their

entry into a TRIO program. The first finding is the focus on the self in the abstract, with over

half of students stating specific goals that they want to accomplish by way of their

postsecondary enrollment or postsecondary degree attainment. The second finding is the

focus on the family in the abstract, with almost one-fourth of students articulating the desire

to be role models for other family members or to acknowledge prior or future generations.

The third finding is the students' enthusiasm about and pride in being first-generation college

students at present or in the future, with over one-fourth of the students referring to the honor

of being the first in their families to go to college. The fourth finding is the students'

perspectives on their futures that extend beyond the postsecondary enrollment and

postsecondary degree attainment purposes of TRIO programs. Differences between the

statements written by young students preparing for postsecondary enrollment in the future

and those written by older students already in college are uncovered and explored.

Implications of the findings and of the resulting theory for TRIO program management and for

federal policy are presented in hopes that they might inform TRIO purposes and services to

students in the programs' next 50 years. Suggestions for further research are also presented.

Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the splendid guidance of Dr. Jim Killacky, my chair and major professor, throughout the doctoral program and the dissertation journey. To Dr. Les Bolt and Dr. Susan McCracken, my dissertation committee members, I offer thanks for their insights at every step in the process and for their suggestions that I approach several key questions in new ways. I appreciate Dr. Vachel Miller, Dr. Kelly Clark-Keefe, and Dr. George Olson, doctoral faculty members. All faculty and staff at Appalachian State have been attentive to my specific questions, and I am grateful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the aspirations and needs of students who enroll in a federally-funded TRIO program that offers services to students to facilitate their postsecondary enrollment (PSE) or their postsecondary degree attainment (PSA). Students' aspirations and needs were considered against the purposes of the TRIO programs, as stated in United States (U.S.) legislation.

The approach by St. Clair (2004) of using the "aspirational myth" in adult education was relevant for the study and warrants introduction here. As in adult education programs, where there are few of the influences—school boards, standard curricula—common in public schools and colleges to guide curricula to an end point (end-of-course exams and promotion to the next grade), TRIO programs provide services for and rely on students' own aspirations for their futures and envisioned end points at or beyond PSE or PSA. St. Clair (2004) uses "the 'aspirational myth,' or the story of success which guides the learning" (p. 81) as the central tool in engaging adult students. St. Clair (2004) clarifies that "to modern readers this is an unusual use of the term 'myth,' which generally means a falsehood. Here an older meaning of the word is being used to refer to a guiding story" (p. 82). The author states that the concept of the aspirational myth "provides a way to think about the trajectory of learning both in terms of the end point and the path to be taken" (p. 86).

In the current study of students' aspirations at the point of enrolling in a TRIO program, the end point of PSE or PSA is a sustaining guide for successful program outcomes.

But it is not the only guide. Rather, the study sought to explore students' aspirations—how individual students see their futures—at the *start point* of their TRIO experience. Through exploring students' aspirations at the start point of the TRIO journey, the study sought to shed light on *who* TRIO students are—as expressed in their stated concerns, hopes, dreams, needs, fears, challenges, triumphs—beyond the disadvantage that renders them eligible to enter a TRIO program.

For purposes of this study, the term "aspiration" is used broadly and is grounded in individuals' goals, whether to earn graduate degrees, find jobs to pay their bills, help their families, set examples for their children, or become nurses to serve patients in Africa. The body of data supporting the articulation of the research questions for this study comprises completed applications for program enrollment, notes from conversations between TRIO program personnel and applicants to review the applications, and participants' writings in the online *TRIO Tribune* and *Sam Says* newsletters (Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute; CCC&TI, 2004-2012a, 2004-2012b). The processes for enrolling in a TRIO program include self-assessments of academic and personal needs, questions about goals for postsecondary degree attainment, statements of expectations of participants, and signatures from applicants and, in cases of students below 18 years of age, their parents, regarding their commitment to uphold TRIO program expectations.

For almost 50 years, federally funded TRIO programs have served U.S. students. Inspired by the Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964 and developed under the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and its reauthorizations through 2008, TRIO programs offer to participants, beginning at age 11 years, services to support their PSE and PSA. According to the U.S. Department of Education (USED, 2012a), "the federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are

federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds" (2012a, para. 10). According to the USED (2012a), 797,248 students in the U.S. participated in 2,957 TRIO programs in 2011 – 2012.

Definition of the Issue

Each student who chooses to participate in a TRIO program holds aspirations for his or her future. Little is known about these students' aspirations at the point of their enrollment in any one of the federally funded TRIO programs, which promote access to, enrollment in, persistence through, and completion of postsecondary studies (USED, 2012a).

As the federal TRIO programs approach the half-century milestone since their founding, the current study sought to explore what students envision at the start point of their TRIO experience. Through focusing on the start point—students' entry into a TRIO program—the study revealed how the purposes of TRIO programs are, or are not, related to students' aspirations for their futures. A desired result of the study was to illuminate what students state about aspirations and need, if anything, and how their statements might inform TRIO programs in the future.

The Context of and the Debates Surrounding the Issue

The body of research on students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including TRIO students, is deep. Scholars have examined characteristics of disadvantaged students and barriers to their PSE, persistence in college, success in postsecondary studies, and PSA (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006; Mortenson, 2011; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1988; Tinto, 2004; Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004).

In contrast, research on students' aspirations is sketchy. According to Walpole (2007), the "research in the area of educational aspirations is underdeveloped" (p. 47) and, at

the same time, "students' aspirations are critical to eventual [postsecondary degree] attainment and subsequently to other outcomes as well, including income and careers" (p. 53). Kennett, Reed, & Lam (2011) identify the scarcity of research on why students enroll in institutions of higher education, as compared to the abundance of research on why students drop out of college and how they choose careers.

The importance of understanding students' aspirations and needs is referenced not only in the literature, but also in current policy discussions at even the global level. In its report on education and skills, the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda posits that "education policies and programmes must be built on the basis of a careful analysis of the needs and aspirations of the individuals, enterprises and societies in question" (United Nations, 2012, p. 13).

It is the scarcity of research on students' aspirations that the current study addressed. In particular, the study explored if and how disadvantaged students envision their futures, as articulated at their enrollment in a program of support services for PSE or PSA. Instead of focusing on *what* the students from disadvantaged backgrounds are—that is, what characteristics they exhibit or program eligibility criteria they meet—the study focused on *who* the students are, as interpreted through their written statements of aspiration and need. Every program participant who enrolls in or completes postsecondary studies contributes to positive program outcomes. To the degree that program personnel and policymakers understand who students are and to what they aspire, refinements in programs can be illuminated and, perhaps, realized.

Purpose Statement of Research

The purpose of the study was to explore the aspirations and needs of TRIO students through an examination of themes that emerge from TRIO students' narratives, called TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS). Students' TFGCS are written at the point of their entry into a TRIO program for PSE or PSA. The examination was conducted within the context of the purposes of TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What themes emerge from TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS), and what do they reveal about aspiration and need?

2. What is the relationship between the emergent themes and the purposes of the TRIO programs?

3. Do these themes support the purposes of the TRIO programs, as the programs have evolved?

Methodology

The study employed a grounded theory methodology, first described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal work entitled *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* The study followed the emergent design of grounded theory research, which Glaser (1978, 1992) described in subsequent writings.

Significance of the Study

The study explored the themes that emerge from new TRIO students' written statements, including the degree to which new TRIO students' aspirations and needs are or are not articulated, and how those themes support the purposes of the TRIO programs. Such

exploration can lead to refinements, as appropriate, by TRIO programs in aligning their services with the envisioned futures that new TRIO participants identify at the start point of their experience in a TRIO program.

The study provides information to TRIO program personnel at CCC&TI, at other community colleges in North Carolina, and at four-year institutions across the state. The information generated through the study also carries value for TRIO program practitioners at any of the almost 3,000 TRIO programs across the U.S.

Institutions that sponsor TRIO programs can benefit from the results of the study. Gaining a deeper understanding of TRIO students' aspirations is of use in assessing the needs of their broader student communities and in allocating resources more effectively to address those needs.

In addition, insights gained through the study are of value to the policy community, both within the federal government and in the policy advocacy arena. Most importantly, the results of the study carry significance for TRIO students themselves, both through their gaining inspiration from others who have articulated aspirations and concern for the future and through their inspiring others to ponder and articulate hopes and needs.

The lack of perspective at the micro level – that is, at the level of the individual's views at the start point of his or her experience in a TRIO program – carries, at least, three implications. First, this paucity constrains our understanding of new TRIO students' perspectives on their futures and what, if anything, those perspectives reveal about aspiration and need. A better understanding of these perspectives illuminates new areas of service for the federal TRIO programs.

Second, this paucity limits our understanding of individuals' thinking within the context of the established literature on access to and success in college. Several scholars (Kennett, et al., 2011; Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2011; Walpole, 2007) advocate asking students directly about their intentions and aspirations. Bok (2010) speaks to young students' optimism and the hopefulness that she encountered in her research. Greater understanding of students' aspirations contributes to research on how these emotions play out over the middle school and high school years and through progression into and through college to completion.

Third, this paucity denies us the opportunity to leverage students' early perspectives to more precisely tailor support programs closer to the end point of PSE or PSA. Initiatives tailored more precisely to the perspectives students have held over a period of years can illuminate how to achieve higher positive outcomes at the macro level across support programs. McCracken (2009) points out an inconsistency between college aspiration and actual enrollment and reflects on her research stating that students. . .

> were not taking the courses necessary for college admission. This
>
> nconsistency between aspiration and action is troubling, particularly when
>
> considering the low expectations parents have regarding college enrollment.
>
> Could GEAR UP [Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate
>
> Programs] have created a culture of college expectation that is stronger than
>
> the culture of college preparation? (p. 84)

Understanding students' perspectives more fully at the entry into a college access or college success program can contribute to a closer alignment between those perspectives and students' actions.

Meaning of the Study to the Researcher

As director of the TRIO programs since 2003 at a community college in rural Caldwell County, North Carolina, I see TRIO students struggle with and celebrate progress towards realizing their aspirations. As a fourth-generation college graduate, I can only imagine the struggles and celebrations that my great-grandfather must have experienced in the studies that he completed prior to graduating from college in 1874—precisely one century before I did. Witnessing my current students' struggles and celebrations and benefiting from my great-grandfather's and intervening generations' experiences constitute for me the meaning of the current study.

As the director hired in January 2003 to establish the new TRIO/Educational Talent Search (TRIO/ETS) program at CCC&TI, I envisioned a campaign to invite the 600 incoming TRIO/ETS participants to state their PSE perspectives publicly and in writing. The young students responded. In July 2003, I succeeded the first TRIO/Student Support Services (TRIO/SSS) director following her retirement. At that time, the TRIO programs were blended under one TRIO office at CCC&TI. Parents, children, and others of all ages who were enrolled in either TRIO program were invited to focus together, across generations, on studies leading to PSE and PSA. Students continued to state their PSE and PSA goals and aspirations, publicly and in writing. The resulting collection of statements, CCC&TI's TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS), numbered 981 at the end of December 2011. To conduct the current study, with its potential for positive impact beyond CCC&TI, and its focus on the fruits of the TRIO First-Generation Statement Campaign that I envisioned and initiated, has been an honor for me and, I fervently hope, for the TRIO participants who chose to publicly state their perspectives on the future.

Definition of Terms

The study used terms common in the discourse of the federally funded TRIO programs and of other programs of support for disadvantaged students. Several terms are defined here to offer greater precision and add clarity to the study.

Aspiration. Aspiration is "a. A strong desire for high achievement. b. An object of such desire; ambitious goal" (Morris, 1969, p. 78).

College access program. The college access program serves middle through high school students to support their PSE. Talent Search, Educational Opportunity Centers, and Upward Bound, including its Veterans Upward Bound and Upward Math and Science, are the TRIO programs for college access. The federally-funded GEAR UP is also a college access program.

College success. College success refers to completion of a postsecondary credential program (certificate, diploma, or degree), transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution, or a positive experience in which the student remains in good standing with the institution of higher education. For example, a student might be successful in postsecondary studies and simply not be able to continue studying because of personal, family, health, or financial reasons. If such a student discontinues studies while in good academic and financial standing, as determined by the institution, then that student represents college success.

College success program. The college success program serves college students to support their PSA. Student Support Services and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program are TRIO college success programs.

Disadvantaged student(s). The definition of a disadvantaged student(s) is grounded in the description of TRIO programs at the USED (2012a), which refers to "students from

disadvantaged backgrounds" (para. 1), and comprises a broad segment of the student population that includes, but is not limited to, first-generation college students, low-income students, students with disabilities, non-traditional college students, underserved students, educationally challenged students, and students from under-represented groups.

First-generation college student. A first-generation college student is a "person neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree" (Education Amendments of 1980, p. 1408).

Low-income. A low-income person is "…an individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 per centum of an amount equal to the poverty level determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census" (Education Amendments of 1980, p. 1408).

Need. Need is "1. A condition or situation in which something necessary or desirable is required or wanted. 2. A wish for something that is lacking or desired. 3. Necessity; obligation. 4. Something required or wanted; a requisite" (Morris, 1969, p. 878).

Postsecondary attainment (PSA). PSA is a student's completion of the Associate degree or higher, or a student's successful transfer from a community college to another institution of higher learning for completion of the Associate degree or higher.

Postsecondary enrollment (PSE). PSE is a student's successful enrollment in any postsecondary program.

TRIO. TRIO is the set of federally-funded programs serving first-generation college students, low-income students, students with disabilities, and other students to support and facilitate their PSE and PSA. The "TRIO" name emerged following the establishment of

three programs now known as Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services (USED, 2012a).

TRIO First-Generation College Statement (TFGCS). The TFGCS is a document written by a participant in either of CCC&TI's TRIO programs at the point of enrolling in the program and in which the student states his or her reasons for wanting to study in college or aspirations for the future.

TRIO/Educational Talent Search (TRIO/ETS). TRIO/ETS, also known as Talent Search, is a TRIO program that provides students, ages 11-19 years, with college access services targeting their PSE (USED, 2012a).

TRIO/Student Support Services (TRIO/SSS). TRIO/SSS, also known as Student Support Services, is a program that provides students already in college or accepted for admission to college with college success services targeting their PSA (USED, 2012a). For TRIO/SSS students at CCC&TI, PSA means completing the Associate degree or transferring successfully to another community college or four-year institution.

Summary

This paper introduces issues relating to TRIO students' perspectives at the point of their joining a program focusing on their future college enrollment or future college degree attainment. The federally-funded TRIO programs have evolved over almost 50 years and articulate precise purposes, set precise expectations for engaging broader student groups, and posit precise definitions for enrolling and serving program participants. The literature on the disadvantaged population served by TRIO and other programs is well established and abundantly clear as to *what* these students are. What is lacking is well-established and abundant research on *who* these students are, where *who* corresponds to students'

perspectives on goals and on challenges to meeting those goals. The current study explored students' aspirations at the start point of their TRIO experience and the relationship between students' perspective and the purposes of TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law. Chapter 2 reviews literature in three fields pertaining to TRIO programs and TRIO students' aspirations for the future. Chapter 3 presents the grounded theory methodology that was employed, the rationale for using this methodology, its appropriateness for the study, and descriptions of the collection of data, the selection of participants, and the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research. Chapter 5 presents an analysis of the findings, linking the analysis back to the literature. Chapter 5 also presents how the findings address the gap identified in the stated rationale for the research, considers anew the conceptual framework in relation to the findings, and articulates limitations of the study and implications of the study for various audiences. Chapter 5 concludes by identifying areas for further research that emanate from the study and its findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of three fields of literature that pertain to the study's exploration of TRIO students' aspirations and their relationship to the purposes of TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law. Following the overview of these three fields of literature is a statement of a gap in the literature which the study addressed. The conceptual framework for addressing the identified gap in knowledge on which the study focused is described.

Fields of Literature

Three fields of literature underpinned the study. The first field is the U.S. legislation that articulates the purposes of TRIO programs and governs their implementation. The second field is the discourse on disadvantaged students, of whom the participants in TRIO programs constitute a subset. The third field is students' aspirations.

TRIO Programs: Purposes as Stated in Federal Law

TRIO is more than a set of college access programs. TRIO is an umbrella of programs to support students both in *accessing* college, through services targeting PSE, and in *succeeding in* college, through services targeting PSA. The youngest TRIO participants are 11 years old, and there is no upper age limit for TRIO participation. As seen in Table 1, in the 2010 - 2011 school year, almost half of the TRIO participants were adults. In that same year, most participants were involved in programs designed to support their PSE (Table 2).

Table 1

Ages of Participants Served by TRIO Programs, 2010 - 2011

Program	Participants (%)
Youth, 11-19 years	436,774 (52.0)
TS, UB, UBMS, VUB	
Adult, $\geq$ 18 years	403,960 (48.0)
EOC, SSS, McNair	
Total	840,734 (100)

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward

Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; TS = Talent Search; UB =

Upward Bound; UBMS = Upward Bound Math and Science; VUB = Veterans Upward

Bound; EOC = Educational Opportunity Centers; SSS = Student Support Services; McNair =

Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. TS can serve students up to 27

years of age if there is no EOC in the service area. SSS can serve students younger than 18

years of age if they have completed a secondary school curriculum. The minimum age for

participation in EOC is 19 years. Adapted from *Federal TRIO programs-Homepage*, U.S.

Department of Education, 2012a, http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html

and compiled by the author.

Table 2

TRIO Postsecondary Enrollment and Postsecondary Attainment Programs, 2010 - 2011

Program	Participants (%)
Postsecondary Enrollment	631,219 (75.1)
TS, EOC, UB, UBMS, VUB	
Postsecondary Attainment	209,515 (24.9)
SSS, McNair	
Total	840,734 (100)

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; TS = Talent Search; EOC = Educational Opportunity Centers; UB = Upward Bound; UBMS = Upward Bound Math and Science; VUB = Veterans Upward Bound; SSS = Student Support Services; McNair = Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program. TS can serve students up to 27 years of age if there is no EOC in the service area. SSS can serve students younger than 18 years of age if they have completed a secondary school curriculum. The minimum age for participation in EOC is 19 years. Adapted from *Federal TRIO programs-Homepage*, U.S. Department of Education, 2012a, http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html and compiled by the author.

The importance of recognizing TRIO's full panoply of programs and the services they bring is clear. Engstrom and Tinto (2008) argue that college access alone is insufficient and posit the importance of services to support students in being successful in postsecondary studies. While not specifically naming the TRIO programs, Engstrom and Tinto (2008) reference the kinds of services that TRIO programs provide throughout the postsecondary journey stating that:

Access without support is not opportunity. That institutions do not intentionally exclude students from college does not mean that they are including them as fully valued members of the institution and providing them with support that enables them to translate access into success. Too often our conversations about access ignore the fact that without support many students, especially those who are poor or academically underprepared, are unlikely to succeed. (p. 50)

The following section reviews the evolution of TRIO programs, through focusing on their history and looking specifically at the legislation that established the programs. The review of the evolution of TRIO programs is divided into the periods of 1964 – 2002 and 2003 – 2011. Because one set of data (that is, the TFGCS) in which the current study was grounded was generated between January 2003 and December 2011, this division of the review of TRIO's evolution into two periods allows for one such period to coincide with this specific set of data.

Evolution of TRIO programs. According to the USED (2012b), the "history of TRIO is progressive. It began with Upward Bound, which emerged out of the EOA of 1964 in response to the administration's War on Poverty" (para.1). Talent Search, which is an

outreach program to secondary school students, was created as part of the HEA of 1965. The creation in 1968 of a program later known as Student Support Services meant that three – a "trio"—of supportive programs held their own place in federal higher education policy targeting underserved students.

Mortenson (2011) describes TRIO in this way:

Since 1965 the federal government has also developed supportive services programs to address barriers to higher education for students from low-income, first-generation family backgrounds. These supportive services are commonly referred to as TRIO Programs. Between 1970 and 1973 there actually were three TRIO Programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services. But Educational Opportunity Centers were added in 1974 and the TRIO moniker stuck. Even when the McNair Scholars Program was added in 1989, TRIO stuck.

Depending on how programs are counted there are now between five and eight programs that fall under the TRIO umbrella…

While TRIO programs are very large and serve many students, by normal measures they do not reach more than one student in twenty that would be eligible for such services. (pp. 1-2)

Presented in Appendix A is a depiction of the umbrella of TRIO programs for 2010 - 2011, the year each program was founded, the number of grant awards made across the U.S. for each program, and the average number of participants in each grant award.

Every TRIO program is accountable along various measures, some of which are presented in the appendices to this paper that trace the statutory evolution of TRIO programs.

Examples of accountability measures noted in this section are drawn from the TRIO/SSS and

TRIO/ETS programs.

Introduced in the Education Amendments of 1980, every TRIO/SSS program must

provide assurances through their annual performance reports (APR) as follows:

(a) An applicant must assure the Secretary in the application that—

(1) Not less than two-thirds of the project participants will be—

(i) Low-income individuals who are first-generation college students; or

(ii) Individuals with disabilities;

(2) The remaining project participants will be low-income individuals, first-

generation college students, or individuals with disabilities; and

(3) Not less than one-third of the individuals with disabilities served also will

be low-income individuals. (p. 1410)

Annually, every TRIO/SSS program must provide data from which the following are

drawn: rate of retention, or persistence, in studies, of participants from the opening of one

academic year to the next, and the rate of graduation and/or transfer within a specific number

of years.

Introduced in the Education Amendments of 1980, the corresponding assurances for

TRIO/ETS programs that must be provided in their APRs are stated:

An applicant must submit, as part of its application, assurances that—

(a) At least two-thirds of the individuals it serves under its proposed Talent

Search project will be low-income individuals who are potential first-

generation college students;

(b) The project will collaborate with other Federal TRIO projects, GEAR UP

projects, or programs serving similar populations that are serving the same

target schools or target area in order to minimize the duplication of services

and promote collaborations so that more students can be served.

(c) The project will be located in a setting or settings accessible to the

individuals proposed to be served by the project; and

(d) If the applicant is an institution of higher education, it will not use the

project as a part of its recruitment program. (p. 1408)

Annually, every TRIO/ETS program must provide data from which the following

rates are drawn: promotion of TRIO/ETS participants from one grade to the next, high

school graduation for senior year participants, and postsecondary enrollment in the fall

following high school graduation or acceptance for enrollment in the spring semester

following high school graduation.

The following section reviews the purposes of the various TRIO programs, according

to federal legislation, starting with the EOA of 1964, proceeding through the HEA of 1965,

and considering the HEA's reauthorizations in subsequent legislation in 1968, 1972, 1976,

1980, 1986, 1992, 1998, and 2008. The review comprises two time frames. First, the time

frame from 1964 – 2002 is considered. Second, the time frame from 2003 – 2011 is

considered. The 2003 – 2011 period encompasses all of the narrative data analyzed in the

current study. A summary statement on each of these pieces of legislation follows, with a

notation of the corresponding appendix where details are presented.

1964 – 2002 period. The first TRIO program was established in 1965; however, the year 1964 introduced legislation which led to the creation of the support programs that have become known as TRIO.

Economic Opportunity Act (EOA) of 1964. In the "Findings and Declaration of Purpose" statement at the opening of the EOA of 1964, educational opportunity gains a secure spot. According to this statement,

> It is, therefore, the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of
>
> poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the
>
> opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the
>
> opportunity to live in decency and dignity. (p. 508)

The EOA of 1964 established the Office of Economic Opportunity, which, in 1965, launched various pilot programs that became known as Upward Bound. There is no mention of Upward Bound in the EOA. Appendix B presents the full statement of the "Findings and Declaration of Purpose" for the EOA.

Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965. The HEA of 1965 established the first of what became the federal TRIO programs. The first program focused on youth and was named "Contracts to Encourage Full Utilization of Educational Talent." Appendix C offers details on the HEA of 1965 and its seminal clause in establishing the first educational opportunity program.

Higher Education Amendments of 1968. The Higher Education Amendments of 1968 named three educational opportunity programs—Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students. These three became known informally as "TRIO" and served students in secondary school and postsecondary studies. This legislation established

Upward Bound as a program under the Commissioner of Education and no longer under the Office of Economic Opportunity. Appendix D offers details on this legislation.

Education Amendments of 1972. The Education Amendments of 1972 established the Educational Opportunity Centers, serving adults for PSE, as the fourth educational opportunity program. Appendix E offers details on this legislation.

Education Amendments of 1976. The Education Amendments of 1976 added the fifth educational opportunity program—not to serve targeted student populations but, rather, to train staff working with the programs. Appendix F offers details on this legislation.

Education Amendments of 1980. The Education Amendments of 1980 defined the terms "first-generation college student" and "low-income," introduced required assurances by grantees for program participants, and named services for students with limited English proficiency as permissible. These amendments also specified age ranges for participants in the Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Educational Opportunity Center programs. Appendix G provides details on this legislation.

Higher Education Amendments of 1986. The Higher Education Amendments of 1986 expanded the definition of "first-generation college" to address children of single parents and established a sixth program, the Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, to serve students through completion of doctoral degrees. Appendix H provides details on this legislation.

Higher Education Amendments of 1992. The Higher Education Amendments of 1992 renamed the section "Disadvantaged Students" as "Federal Outreach and Student Services Programs," introduced "Federal TRIO Programs" nomenclature, dropped the age for eligibility to participate in Talent Search from 12 to 11 years, defined the three purposes of Student Support Services, named the Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program for Ronald

E. McNair, and added a seventh program for evaluating TRIO activities. Appendix I provides details on this legislation.

Higher Education Amendments of 1998. The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 established GEAR UP as a program serving cohorts of students and distinct from TRIO programs, whose focus is on individual students. Appendix J corresponds to the Higher Education Amendments of 1998.

None of the pertinent laws established the versions of Upward Bound known as Veterans Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math and Science. The USED established Upward Bound Math and Science in 1990 (USED, 2012b). There is no mention in the Higher Education Act of 1965 or its reauthorizations of the Veterans Upward Bound program. According to Mitchem (2012), Veterans Upward Bound was created through another channel:

> In 1972, there was growing concern among legislators for the plight of returning Vietnam veterans and the many readjustment problems they were facing. Education appeared as one possible solution. The Second Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1972 included roughly $5 million for a one-year "Talent Search/Upward Bound Program" to help returning Vietnam veterans enter college. Since almost none of the then current Upward Bound regulations were designed for adults, and the Veterans Upward Bound was to last only one year, this program was initiated without any regulations. Thus, a new "temporary" TRIO program began as a specialized adjunct to Upward Bound.

In the current legislative amendments to the Higher Education Act (including the original 1972 amendment), you will not find the name "Veterans Upward Bound". Rather, as part of the "Permissible Services" listed under Upward Bound (Sec. 402C), you will find the following:

"Special services to enable veterans to make the transition to postsecondary education." (para. 3-5)

The foregoing section has reviewed the evolution of TRIO programs since their inception in 1964 through 2002. The paragraphs that follow detail the evolution from 2003 – 2011, the period that coincides with one data set on which the current study was based.

2003 – 2011 period. From 2003 – 2011, the principal development in the evolution of TRIO programs was the 2008 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Known as the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, this reauthorization was signed into law by President George W. Bush on August 14, 2008, a full decade after the prior reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 introduced economic and financial literacy services as requirements for Talent Search and Upward Bound, as permissible services for McNair, and as the third and fourth purposes of the Educational Opportunity Centers and Student Support Services, respectively. Appendix K offers further details on this legislation.

Emerging in the 2003 through 2011 period was an effort at the federal level to introduce a common "TRIO" terminology across the umbrella of TRIO programs. The director of the Office of Federal Programs from 2002 - 2007 attempted to corral the organic multiplication of programs into a unified program of services for individuals across ages and

levels of educational attainment. The cover article entitled "Seamless Services" in the summer 2005 issue of *Let's Talk TRIO*, the newsletter of the Office of Federal TRIO Programs, speaks to the new mindset and coordinated management that the federal TRIO director envisioned:

> The federal TRIO projects across this country all support the shared goal of enrollment in and completion of college for students who are low-income, first-generation, or with disabilities. In striving towards this shared goal, it follows that our working more as coordinated parts of a single program, rather than as disconnected pieces will more fully meet that goal.
>
> Through federal TRIO dollars, we are making a substantial investment in our students. Just as a personal investment account needs to be managed to maximize its return, the investment in students who participate in TRIO projects needs to be managed as well. By program directors working hand-in-hand, the entire federal TRIO program benefits, as do each of the components. Shifting the mindset from individual programs to the concept of a unified program results in greater coordination of services and, potentially, a higher return on the program dollars invested. (USED, 2005, p. 1)

Appearing in the same issue and reflecting the coordinated approach is the request for using the "TRIO" term in referencing any program (USED 2005).

> Name Recognition: When new TRIO awards are made, be sure to include "TRIO" and the TRIO component in your project's name, e.g., TRIO Talent Search. Building name recognition of the federal TRIO program and its parts

will lead to greater community identification and understanding. (USED, 2005, p. 1)

The federal TRIO director's efforts to promote a common terminology to communicate the TRIO brand of support services for disadvantaged students produced only limited success. As presented in the U.S. Department of Education's Student Service homepage (2012c), the current program nomenclature and personnel organization continue to reflect a clear divide between college access and college success services.

The following section reviews the discourse on disadvantaged students, the second field of literature examined for the current study.

Discourse on Disadvantaged Students

This section departs from the HEA of 1965 term "disadvantaged students" and acknowledges other terms in federal law and in the literature to address the broad spectrum of students whom TRIO programs target. This spectrum of students comprises groups who are identified in various ways and who defy a single definition. "First-generation college" and "low-income" are the terms most closely associated with TRIO and defined for TRIO programs in the Education Amendments of 1980. These definitions are presented in Chapter 1 of this paper and are used in the current study. Other definitions of first-generation college and low-income are reviewed in the following two sections. The third section that follows addresses other barriers facing disadvantaged students, as seen in the literature.

First-generation college in literature. The literature defines first-generation college in various ways. Engle et al. (2006) define first-generation students as "students whose parents did not attend college" (p. 5). In their study on community-college students,

Prospero and Vohra-Gupta (2007) define the term as "someone whose parents have not completed a college degree program" (p. 963). Tym et al. (2004) state:

> Research indicates that students whose parents did not attend college are more likely than their non first-generation counterparts to be less academically prepared for college, to have less knowledge of how to apply for college and for financial assistance, and to have more difficulty in acclimating themselves to college once they enroll. (p. 1)

Because the impact of various definitions on students is real, it is incumbent upon researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and students themselves to understand the precise definition that is being used in any study or program of support services. For example, a student whose mother earned an Associate degree is not considered first-generation college under the standards articulated by Engle et al. (2006), Prospero & Vohra-Gupta (2007), or Tym et al. (2004). Such a student could believe that he is ineligible for TRIO services under the first-generation criterion. However, under TRIO, the same student *is* considered first-generation college and would be eligible for TRIO services under the first-generation criterion.

Associated with the literature about access to and success in postsecondary studies for first-generation college students is the current policy focus on college completion. In his first speech to a joint session of Congress, President Barack H. Obama (2009) stated,

> It is our responsibility as lawmakers and educators to make this system work. But it is the responsibility of every citizen to participate in it. And so tonight, I ask every American to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a four-year

school; vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training

may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.

And dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It's not just quitting

on yourself, it's quitting on your country –- and this country needs and values

the talents of every American. That is why we will provide the support

necessary for you to complete college and meet a new goal: By 2020,

America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in

the world. (para. 66)

According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Center (IPEDS, 2012a), the definition of postsecondary "completer" is a "student who receives a degree, diploma, certificate, or other formal award. In order to be considered a completer, the degree/award must actually be conferred." To determine graduation rates, IPEDS (2012b) examines the degree and certificate seeking students, as evidenced in its definition of graduation rates.

Graduation Rates -- Data are collected on the number of students entering the

institution as full-time, first-time, degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate

students in a particular year (cohort), by race/ethnicity and gender; the number

completing their program within 150 percent of normal time to completion;

the number that transfer to other institutions if transfer is part of the

institution's mission (IPEDS, 2012b).

In articulating his 2020 goal for the U.S., President Obama specifically addressed neither first-generation college nor TRIO students. However, his call to action affects discourse on college completion. Under President Obama's 2020 goal and under the IPEDS definitions, "completer" carries the lower standard of degree, diploma, or certificate

completion than does the degree-completion (or transfer) standard of TRIO college success programs. In this context of varied standards for college completion, it is important to note the National College Access Network's introduction of and advocacy for "Common Measures for College Access" (2012a) and "Common Measures for College Success" (2012b). These common measures identify essential indicators for academics, testing, college admissions, financial assistance, pre-college programs, college enrollment, persistence in college, and articulation between two-year and four-year institutions for transfer students.

Other elements that contribute to the disadvantage. Various studies (Engle et al., 2006; Mortenson, 2011; Walpole, 2007) describe the barriers that first-generation students from low-income families face. In their study on community college students, Prospero and Vohra-Gupta (2007) note similar barriers. Similarly, Schneider and Yin (2012) argue that "far too many students are not college ready, often have to work long hours while they study, and are supporting families while they study" (p. 2).

In her recent work, Rendón (2006) introduces other elements of disadvantage. Rendón identifies the underserved population as comprising four groups: first-generation, low-income students; Generation 1.5 students (children of immigrants); students learning through electronic media; and students enrolled in for-profit institutions.

Walpole (2007) proposes an umbrella term to identify the underserved student population, which she identifies as low-SES (socioeconomic status), low-income, first-generation, and working-class students. In Walpole's words,

> I propose creating a broader category to include all the research on this
>
> population. Referencing others' studies definitions and findings, as well as

viewing students' experiences holistically, may provide new insights that will

assist policymakers and practitioners. I propose the term *economically and*

educationally challenged (EEC) to describe these students…this collective

group of EEC students faces similar obstacles in gaining access to college,

reports similar kinds of experiences and levels of involvement while enrolled,

and has similar outcomes after college. (pp. 14-15)

The work of other scholars elucidates further elements of disadvantage. Midgley,

Hodge, and Monk (2003) examine disadvantage through the lens of rural and urban

perspectives. Boyle and Lipman (2002) analyze the role of location, and specifically

neighborhood conditions, in their focus on students' behavior. Among the elements included

in their analysis are single-parent families and socioeconomic factors. In its research agenda,

the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (2012) speaks to language and

financial barriers to Hispanic students' achievement and to the importance of addressing

those disadvantages throughout the primary and secondary years and in preparing Hispanic

students for postsecondary studies. According to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and

Universities, "the nation cannot meet its workforce needs without Hispanic Americans and it

cannot address the economic and technological challenges of today's economy without doing

a better job of assuring higher education access and success for Hispanic students" (p. 1).

Assurances: The student as "what." Regardless of the specific terms applied to the

full spectrum of underserved students, TRIO program participants remain a subset of this

population. TRIO programs focus on first-generation college, low-income students, and

students with disabilities. Students participating in the federally funded TRIO programs

constitute one subset of the broad spectrum of underserved student populations. With

passage of the Education Amendments of 1980, TRIO programs have been required to

provide assurances each year regarding the first-generation and low-income composition of

their participants. From the literature focusing on barriers and elements of disadvantage and

from the assurances provided by TRIO and other support programs, there is little question as

to *what* a disadvantaged student is. Figure 1 depicts TRIO's purposes and the *what* of

disadvantaged students.

| Purposes, Per Law | Start Point | End Point |

```
TRIO/ETS
1. Identify youth
and encourage for
PSE
2. Publicize
financial aid                  What?
3. Encourage                 Assurances
drop-outs to re-
enter for PSE              2/3 first-gen and
                             low-income;
TRIO/SSS                     1/3 disabilities      ⟹   PSE, PSA
1. Retention,              or first-gen or
graduation                 low-income or
2. Transfer                     other
3. Supportive
climate
4. Financial,
economic literacy
```
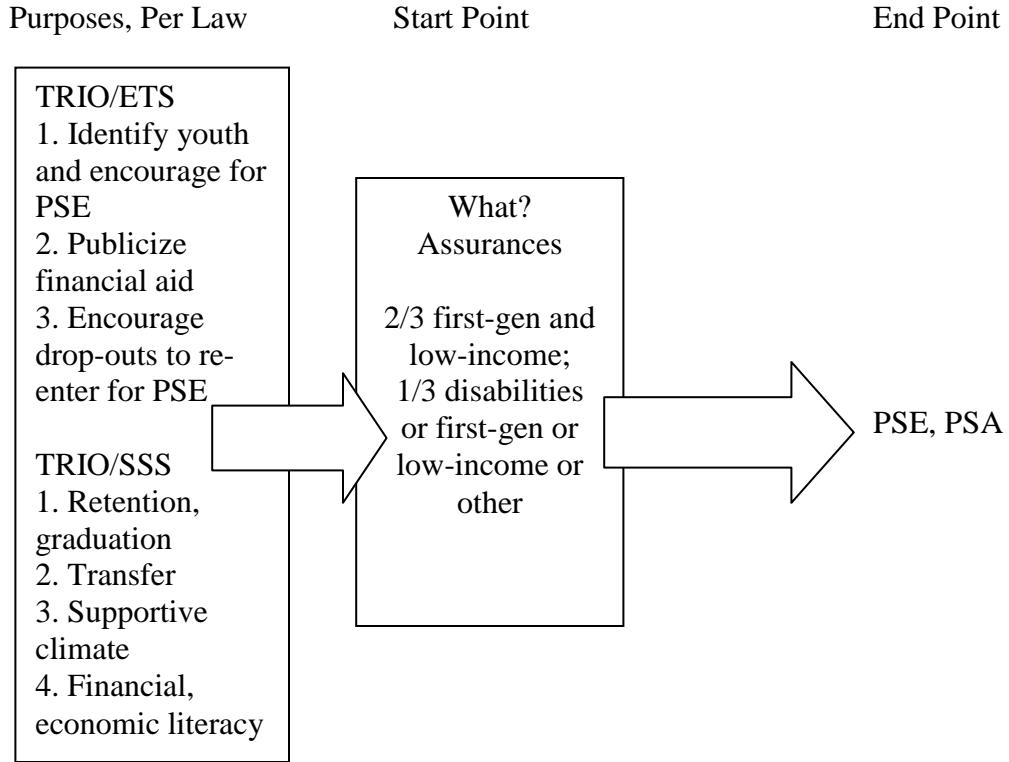
Figure 1. The start point: Students' aspirations at entry into a TRIO program. TRIO = the

first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound,

established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent Search;

SSS = Student Support Services; PSE = Postsecondary Enrollment; PSA = Postsecondary

Attainment; first-gen = a first-generation college student is a "person neither of whose

parents competed a baccalaureate degree" (Education Amendments of 1980, p. 1408). Figure

compiled by the author.

Various studies have made the transition to focusing on *who* disadvantaged students

are. Engle et al. (2006) capture insights not at the start point, but rather at the end point, of

TRIO participants' experiences in a PSE program. The study focuses on students'

perceptions at the end point of their high school completion and on the cusp of enrolling in

college, as noted below.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain from first-generation students themselves which messages and services have the most impact on whether or not they enroll in college. The study design involved focus groups with 135 first-generation students in Texas. Students who participated in the focus groups were recent alumni of pre-college TRIO programs—Talent Search and Upward Bound—enrolled in two- and four-year institutions throughout the State. (Engle et al., 2006, p. 10)

Though important in presenting students' views on TRIO, the work is limited in ways that elucidated the need for the current study (Engle et al., 2006). First, there is little insight through the Engle et al. (2006) study on TRIO participants' perceptions at the beginning of their TRIO experiences. Given the design of the study by Engle et al. (2006), students' descriptions of their TRIO experiences necessarily reflect the messages and services they received through TRIO program personnel and materials. In their comparison of GEAR UP and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) programs in Texas, Watt, Huerta, and Lozano (2007) similarly engaged 142 students who were in the 10th grade and who were students well into their college access program experiences. According to these researchers,

It was hypothesized that students who enroll in one or both UTPA [University of Texas Pan American] college preparatory programs would exhibit much stronger knowledge about college preparation, be more academically prepared, and have higher aspirations and anticipations for postsecondary education than students who did not participate in the preparatory programs. (Watt et al., 2007, p. 147)

A second limitation of the Engle et al. (2006) study, which evinced the need for the current study, is the focus on students' recent past. The Daigneault and Wirtz (2008) findings are similar, in that they focus on the transition from high school to college—a narrow, six-month time frame. In its orientation towards the future, the current study explores students' aspirations, stated in the present, for a future, still years ahead. As a result, the study illuminates how students' perspectives might be used to inform the services that TRIO programs provide during the students' years of participation.

Tinto's (1975) seminal work on students' integration into the academic life of college and its importance for mitigating disadvantages addresses extrinsic and intrinsic measures. These measures speak to elements of aspirations and goals for the future. Tinto (1975) argues that "an individual's integration can be measured in terms of both his grade performance and his intellectual development during the college years" (p. 104). Grade performance constitutes an extrinsic reward that "can be utilized by persons as tangible resources for future educational and career mobility" (p. 104). The intrinsic reward refers to students' perceptions of their intellectual growth. In Tinto's words, "intellectual development, on the other hand, represents a more intrinsic form of reward that can be viewed as an integral part of a person's personal and academic development" (p. 104).

Tinto's articulation of intrinsic rewards speaks conceptually to St. Clair's (2004) notion of aspirational myth. Both concepts are grounded in the individual's wishes for his or her development. St. Clair (2004) ascribes importance to the aspirational myth, where students' learning is measured against the guiding story that they have created with their instructors. St. Clair (2004) describes the value of leveraging aspirations. In St. Clair's words, "instead of being told by instructors how they fall short of the desirable standards,

learners are able to compare themselves to a mythologized figure and make their own judgments" (St. Clair, 2004, p. 92). The section that follows provides an overview of the literature on student aspirations, as the third field of literature examined in this paper.

Student Aspirations

This section presents a brief review of the literature on student aspirations and presents how it informed the current study.

Aspirations: The student as "who." In contrast to the discourse on disadvantaged students, where the focus is on what students are and which characteristics they carry from their past, the literature of student aspirations focuses on who students are and what they envision their futures to be. In his study of children's college aspirations and expectations, Elliott (2009) states that:

> Aspirations are sometimes expressed by people as a desire or a hope. They are
>
> not formed through experience or by making judgments, instead, they are
>
> taught through socialization. Aspirations are relatively stable beliefs that are
>
> often maintained even in the face of contradictory evidence. (para. 1)

In the current study, the researcher adopted the position that students' aspirations comprise beliefs, hopes, and dreams that can indeed be sustained, even when conditions seem overwhelming.

The aspirational myth and the end point. St. Clair (2004) posits the aspirational myth as the guiding story that students and their instructors cocreate to move towards the end point of desired learning. According to St. Clair (2004), "the aspirational myth can help to explain why education can be so profoundly affecting. The aspirational myth allows the educational process to bear upon learners' aspirations and perceptions of reality" (p. 92). In

projecting further possible research using the concept of the aspirational myth, St. Clair

(2004) encourages its application in arenas beyond adult education. According to St. Clair

(2004), "one critical piece of work to be done is to examine a variety of educational contexts

to bring forward the contours of the aspirational myth underpinning each" (p. 94). The

current study leaned on the concept of the aspirational myth to examine students' goals for

the end point of PSE or PSA or for the extension beyond PSE or PSA.

Research on the topic of student aspirations is scarce. Studies noted here address this

scarcity, the importance of directly asking students about their aspirations, the nature of

students' aspirations, sustaining those aspirations over years, and the aspiration for higher

education as a means to a better life and not as an ends. Similarly, there is a scarcity of

research on students' own statements of educational aspiration and of directly asking students

about their academic futures. Kennett et al. (2011) identify this scarcity in their study stating

that:

> Even though there has been a lot of research on the reasons for why students
>
> drop out of university (cf. Tinto, 1998) and reasons for choosing particular
>
> professions (e.g., Watt & Richardson, 2008), surprisingly, there has been
>
> limited research directly asking students why they come to institutions of
>
> higher learning in the first place. (p. 65)

Even in the research by Kennett et al. (2011), the focus is on students who are

already at a university and who reflect on their past decision to enroll in

postsecondary studies. The study presented in this paper sought to examine students'

current perspectives for a future—whether a near future or a distant future--in which

PSE or PSA plays a role and to examine how those perspectives relate to and support the purposes of the TRIO programs.

In its focus on barriers to postsecondary study, much of the discourse on underserved student populations emerges from analysis of overcoming the past, surmounting prior challenges, and releasing familiar ties. Tinto (1988) addresses the separation phase that disadvantaged and other college students experience as they leave home. According to Tinto (1988), "the first stage of the college career, separation, requires students to disassociate themselves, in varying degrees, from membership in the past communities, most typically those associated with the local high school and place of residence" (p. 443).

Students' aspirations as assets. In focusing on students' aspirations, the discourse on underserved students opens the door to envisioning a path of hope. Appadurai (2004) speaks to aspiration as building on current action and to reach future benefits and posits that "aspirations certainly have something to do with wants, preferences, choices, and calculations" (p. 67).

In her study on a low-SES community, Bok (2010) describes the aspirations of 11- and 12-year-old students, as noted below.

> While the school selected for this study is located in a geographic area that is homogenously categorised as low SES, it quickly became clear that students' attitudes and dispositions toward education are *heterogeneous* and their preferred futures are generally *optimistic and hopeful.* (Bok, 2010, p. 166)

In her study of educational aspirations among low-income youth, Berzin (2010) calls for more research on the articulation of students' aspirations and on how these aspirations are sustained over time.

To further support work with youths, additional research is needed to understand the complexities of educational goals and how different mechanisms support youth outcomes. Research is needed that examines aspirations over multiple years, examines the impact of additional variables on aspirations, and works toward understanding how high aspirations are sustained and converted into high levels of attainment. (Berzin, 2010, p. 122)

Sellar et al. (2011) speak to the issue of aspiration as an important element in individuals' imagining futures for themselves, rather than as an end-point or destination.

[R]ather than approaching the task of "raising aspiration" from the perspective of HE [higher education] as the desirable end, this shift in approach would involve creating public spaces of debate about how the imagined worlds, or desired ends, of different groups can be resourced and realized *through* (higher) education. (Sellar et al., 2011, p. 48)

Domina, Conley, and Farkas (2011) make the case for valuing and leveraging students' aspirations and report their research findings.

We find a causal link between student educational expectations and student beliefs about the importance of high school academics. Furthermore, we demonstrate that the relationship between educational expectations and effort is strong, positive, and robust for all students except those with the very lowest levels of educational skills. (Domina et al., 2011, p. 118)

The current study built on the literature reviewed in this section to explore whether or not students' aspirations emerge as a theme in their TFGCS at the start point of their TRIO

experience. The analysis included consideration of emergent themes in light of the purposes of TRIO programs.

Gap in Knowledge that the Study Addressed

It is the scarcity of research on students' aspirations that the study sought to address. In particular, the study explored whether or not disadvantaged students speak of aspirations and need at the start point of their participation in a program of support services for PSE or PSA. To the degree that program personnel and policymakers understand who students are and to what they aspire, there is potential for examining how students' aspirations relate to and support the purposes of the TRIO programs. Like the literature on student aspiration explored in this section, the current study embraced a forward-looking stance that focuses on opportunity in and through aspirations for higher education and beyond.

Students' aspirations at the start point. St. Clair (2004) introduces the powerful concept of the aspirational myth and its importance as a guiding story for approaching the end point of a specific learning journey. Absent in St. Clair's 2004 study is the corresponding attention to the start point, the point when students embark on an educational journey. The current study built on the work of St. Clair (2004) to introduce the concept of the start point—that is, the student's perspectives on the future articulated when the learning journey begins—as a central tool in the analysis.

St. Clair (2004) suggests that there needs to be exploration of aspirational myth as a tool in various work settings. Bok (2010) suggests that there needs to be direct questioning of students as to their aspirations. The transition from one level of schooling to the next is an area that warrants greater attention and that the study addressed. Scholarship on transitions among levels of schooling tends to focus on narrow bands of experience (Engle et al. 2006).

However, there is little research that focuses on students' aspirations for the future across a broad sweep of time and transition, as in the case of 6th-grade students transitioning to middle school and stating in writing their aspirations for PSE, PSA, and beyond PSA.

The who and the what. Most research pertaining to disadvantaged students (Engle et al., 2006; Mortenson, 2011; Tinto, 2004) addresses their characteristics – *what* they are – rather than their aspirations – *who* they are. Federal legislation requires TRIO programs to annually submit assurances on *what* TRIO participants are, with regard to first-generation, low-income family status, and disabilities. Not to understand and leverage students' perspectives for the benefit of TRIO programs is to ignore a potentially important resource for program improvement. Students' written perspectives – statements of where they want to go and how they see PSE or PSA helping to get them there – constitute an untapped resource that the current study sought to elucidate.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this interpretive study incorporates both the legal lens of U.S. legislation governing TRIO programs and the student aspirations lens. Through the legal lens, I focused on the macro level of policy and federal law – specifically, the purposes of TRIO programs as articulated in the HEA of 1965, and through reauthorizations of the HEA. Through the student aspirations lens, I focused at the micro level – specifically, the individual's aspirations, if revealed in their TFGCS – at the start point of enrolling in a TRIO program.

In its focus on the legal lens and the student aspirations lens, the study eschewed employing the lens of discourse on underserved students. The legal and student aspirations lenses afford an exploration from a macro, policy level; from a micro, individual level; and

from the intersection of the macro and the micro levels. As noted by scholars cited in this

section, existing research through the lens of discourse on underserved students is abundant.

Lacking in the discourse is a strong strand of inquiry into what students' perspectives on their

futures are, as stated at the start point of their receiving support services for PSE or PSA.

The current study contributes one thread to that strand of inquiry by focusing on a gap in

knowledge about individual students' aspirations at the start point of their journeys to prepare

for PSE or PSA. Figure 2 depicts the conceptual framework for the study.

Purposes, Per Law	Start Point	End Point	End Point, Extended
TRIO/ETS 1. Identify youth and encourage for PSE 2. Publicize financial aid 3. Encourage drop-outs to re-enter for PSE	What? Assurances 2/3 first-gen and low-income; 1/3 disabilities or first-gen or low-income or other	PSE, PSA	
TRIO/SSS 1. Retention, graduation 2. Transfer 3. Supportive climate 4. Financial, economic literacy	Who? Aspirations Goals, hopes, needs, fears, challenges, triumphs	PSE, PSA	

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for The start point: Students' aspirations at entry into a TRIO program. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent Search; SSS = Student Support Services; PSE = Postsecondary Enrollment; PSA = Postsecondary Attainment; first-gen = a first-generation college student is a "person neither of whose parents competed a baccalaureate degree" (Education Amendments of 1980, p. 1408). Figure compiled by the author.

Summary

This review of three fields of literature—TRIO Programs: Purposes as Stated in Federal Law, Discourse on Disadvantaged Students, and Student Aspirations—revealed a gap in knowledge that could be addressed through the current study. The gap is the scarcity of research on students' aspirations and needs for the future, as articulated at the start point of

their participation in a TRIO college access or college success program. The study was conducted using a conceptual framework that builds on the literature of TRIO programs and their purposes and student aspirations in an examination of how new TRIO students' perspectives relate to and support TRIO program purposes. While Chapter 2 reviewed the literature relevant to the inquiry, Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the grounded theory methodology through which the study was conducted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the current study was to explore the aspirations and needs of TRIO students through an examination of themes that emerge from students' written TFGCS at the point of their entry into a TRIO program for PSE or PSA. The foregoing review of the landscape of legislation and of relevant literature on students' perspectives provided the framework for analyzing the TFGCS. The study sought, first, to explore if the aspirations and needs of new TRIO students relate to and support the purposes of TRIO programs and, second, to pose for future research the question of whether or not early identification of students' aspirations and needs might productively inform management of TRIO programs.

The setting for the study is CCC&TI, a comprehensive community college, offering Associate degree curriculum programs for technical and college transfer studies. CCC&TI comprises two campuses in Caldwell County and Watauga County, NC. Table 3 presents data on CCC&TI's curriculum enrollment, by campus. The Institutional Review Board at Appalachian State University deemed the current study exempt.

Table 3

Enrollment in Curriculum Programs by Campus

School Year	Total	Caldwell	Watauga	Caldwell, as % of Total
2009 - 2010	6530	4676	1854	71.6
2010 - 2011	6398	4596	1802	71.9
2011 - 2012	6223	4448	1775	71.5

Note. Adapted from Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, 2012.

TRIO students in the U.S. number roughly 800,000; in every project under the TRIO umbrella two-thirds of the participants must meet the first-generation college and low-income criteria. At CCC&TI, the two TRIO programs serve roughly 825 participants each year. Table 4 presents data on the number of participants served through the two TRIO programs at CCC&TI in each of the years from 2003 – 2011.

Table 4

TRIO Students in Caldwell County, 2003 – 2011

Academic Year	TRIO/ETS	TRIO/SSS	Participants
2002 - 2003	602	175	777
2003 - 2004	601	203	804
2004 - 2005	602	199	801
2005 - 2006	601	180	781
2006 - 2007	609	200	809
2007 - 2008	627	213	840
2008 - 2009	627	213	840
2009 - 2010	625	206	831
2010 - 2011	625	202	827
Total	5519	1791	7310

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent Search; SSS = Student Support Services. Adapted from material submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for the TRIO Program at Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute (2011).

Data presented in CCC&TI's grant-proposal in 1992 to establish the TRIO/SSS program indicated that 76% of CCC&TI students met the first-generation college and low-income criteria for eligibility (CCC&TI, 1992). Table 5 provides more recent information on the first-generation college population who study at CCC&TI's campus in Caldwell County, NC.

Table 5

Enrollment of College Students in Curriculum Programs at the Caldwell Campus

School Year	Total	First-Generation	First-Generation, as % of total
2009 - 2010	4676	2802	59.9
2010 - 2011	4596	2638	57.4
2011 - 2012	4448	2452	55.1

Note. Adapted from Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, 2012.

Data from the grant proposal that CCC&TI submitted in 2001 to establish the TRIO/ETS program indicated that 92% of the adult population in Caldwell County lacked a Bachelor degree, which means that their children would qualify for TRIO/ETS under the first-generation college criterion (CCC&TI, 2001). In an area where there has been and remains so high a first-generation college student population, it is important to understand what students hope to achieve through PSE and PSA. Examining what students write at the point of entry into a support program like TRIO is one step towards gaining such understanding. Considering students' aspirations and needs—what they want, what they see as important or necessary—in the context of TRIO programs' purposes is one step towards understanding if and how their perspectives relate to and support the purposes of the TRIO programs. The current study sought to contribute to such understanding.

Overview of the Methodology, Appropriateness for Study

The study employed a grounded theory methodology, first described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their seminal work entitled *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* In this work, Glaser and Strauss (1967) define grounded theory as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (p. 2).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) articulate their purpose in writing their study, as follows:

Our principal aim is to stimulate other theorists to codify and publish their

own methods for generating theory. We trust that they will join us in telling

those who have not yet attempted to generate theory that it is not a residual

chore in this age of verification. Though difficult, it is an exciting adventure.

(p. 8)

In subsequent writing (1978), Glaser presents the methodology for this new approach

in the following manner:

Grounded Theory is based on the systematic generating of theory from data,

that itself is systematically obtained from social research. Thus the grounded

theory method offers a rigorous, orderly guide to theory development that at

each stage is closely integrated with a methodology of social research.

Generating theory and doing social research are two parts of the same process.

(p. 2)

For Patton (2002), the foundational question in grounded theory methodology is,

"what theory emerges from systematic comparative analysis and is grounded in fieldwork so

as to explain what has been and is observed?" (p. 125). Patton also notes that "grounded

theory focuses on the process of generating theory rather than a particular theoretical

content" (p. 125).

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) address the creative engagement that the grounded theory

methodology affords through positing that "grounded theory strategies allow for imaginative

engagement with data that simple application of a string of procedures precludes. This

engagement with data creates a space where the unexpected can occur: thus, unexpected

events and experiences may emerge" (p. 25). Patton (2002), too, addresses the creativity

inherent in grounded theory, while simultaneously making clear its realist and objectivist

stance. According to Patton (2002),

> As a matter of philosophical distinctness, then, grounded theory is best
>
> understood as fundamentally realist and objectivist in orientation,
>
> emphasizing disciplined and procedural ways of getting the researcher's
>
> biases out of the way but adding healthy doses of creativity to the analytic
>
> process. (pp. 128-129)

Patton (2002) posits further "its emphasis on generating theory as the primary purpose of

qualitative social science and its overt embrace of objectivity as a research stance" (p. 129).

The grounded theory methodology was appropriate for the study. The review of the

literature on student aspirations uncovered no research precisely the same as the current

study. The study's innovation in focusing on students' perspectives at the start point of their

TRIO experience represents an opportunity for better understanding *who* TRIO students are.

The findings from the study have generated new understandings of disadvantaged students'

perspectives that could inform TRIO program practices not only at CCC&TI, but also at

other institutions.

> According to Hunter, Murphy, Grealish, Casey, and Keady (2011),
>
> GT [grounded theory] research aims to understand what is going on in a given
>
> instance, particularly in common social settings that are not well understood
>
> and have not been exhaustively researched. GT research does not produce a
>
> set of definitive findings or a description; instead, it produces an ongoing

conceptual theory. This theory will be recognizable to people familiar with

the instance and will be modifiable to similar settings. (p. 7)

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) aver that, in the evolution of grounded theory

methodology, "it is important to note that even from the outset a significant strand of

practice-oriented research was manifest" (p. 6). In his commentary on grounded theory,

Creswell (2012) states that

Because a theory is "grounded" in the data, it provides a better explanation

than a theory borrowed "off the shelf," because it fits the situation, actually

works in practice, is sensitive to individuals in a setting, and may represent all

of the complexities found in the process. (p. 423)

Corbin and Holt (2005) speak to grounded theory's significance in stating that "perhaps the

most valuable aspect of grounded theory is its ability to generate basic concepts, thereby

providing the stepping stones necessary to develop and update a disciplinary body of

knowledge" (p. 51).

Research Paradigm

The study was situated in the interpretive paradigm and employed grounded theory

methods for conducting the research. Glesne (2011) describes the possibilities of

interpretivist inquiry in stating, "your interpretations can point out some significance or

meaning in the world that through your representations, can inspire others to perceive,

believe, or act in different ways" (p. 24).

The qualitative research in the current study was grounded in the written statements

by many different individuals at the start point of the common experience of enrolling in a

TRIO program at CCC&TI. The grounded theory research in the study comprised analyzing

data captured from TRIO students' stories of their perspectives on the future, their needs in the present, and their perceptions of the role that PSE and PSA might play in achieving articulated aspirations and meeting articulated needs.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What themes emerge from TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS, written by new TRIO students), and what do they reveal about aspiration and need?

2. What is the relationship between the emergent themes and the purposes of the TRIO programs?

3. Do these themes support the purposes of the TRIO programs, as the programs have evolved?

Research Design

This study employed the emergent design of grounded theory research and drew on the early work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), subsequent writings of Glaser (1978, 1992), and other scholars' descriptions of and experience with grounded theory research designs (Borgatti, n.d.; Corbin & Holt, 2005; Creswell, 2012; Hunter et al., 2011). Glaser (1978) introduces this form of grounded theory in averring that "good ideas must *earn* their way into the theory through emergence or emergent fit; they cannot be imposed because of learning or because of its extreme form: doctrinairism" (p. 8).

Creswell (2012) encapsulates the emergent design in referring to its flexibility, its grounding in the data, and its absence of forced categories. Corbin and Holt (2005) also refer to Glaser's emergent design and the role of the researcher in stating that "Glaser (1992), for example, holds that theory emerges from data. The notion of emergence implies that a

theory is inherently embedded in the data and it is the task of the analyst to discover what that theory is" (p. 49).

Rationale for the Design

The rationale for this grounded theory research design was to develop a more complete understanding of how students in a rural area, where few adults have earned the Bachelor degree, describe their perspectives on accessing college or completing a college degree in accord with the purposes of TRIO programs. Interpreting students' personal statements at the start point required qualitative research into their written words, as recorded in their TFGCS, prior to their receiving PSE targeted and PSA targeted services over an extended period. The TFGCS constitute the data in which the coding and identification of emerging categories were grounded.

Role of the Researcher, Ethical Considerations

As researcher, I envisioned my role as designer of the study, observer, data collector, data analyst, interpreter of data, and writer of research results. Marshall and Rossman (2006) state,

> The qualitative researcher's challenge is to demonstrate that this personal
> interest—increasingly referred to as the researcher's *positionality*—will not
> bias the study…When direct experience stimulates the initial curiosity, the
> researcher needs to link that curiosity to general research questions. (p. 30)
> Glaser (1978) speaks to the role of the researcher in generating theory in two regards.

First, Glaser (1978) recognizes the human qualities of the researcher.

> Also included at each stage of generating theory is reliance on the social
> psychology of the analyst: that is, his [*sic*] skill, fatigue, maturity, cycling of

motivation, life cycle interest, insights into and ideation from the data.

Generating theory is done by a human being who is at times intimately

involved with and other times quite distant from the data—and who is surely

plagued by other conditions in his [*sic*] life. (p. 2)

Second, Glaser (1978) addresses the researcher's role, in simply stating, "his [*sic*]

mandate is to remain open to what is happening" (p. 3). Patton (2002) refers implicitly to the

objective position of the researcher in his description of grounded theory and "its emphasis

on generating theory as the primary purpose of qualitative social science and its overt

embrace of objectivity as a research stance" (p. 129).

My curiosity is both professional and personal, and my experience played a role in

informing the theory that emerged from the study. My decade of work directing TRIO

programs accounts for my professional curiosity. My personal curiosity stems from my

being a fourth-generation college student and the mother of two fifth-generation college

students. My three older brothers and I were reared by parents whose finances were geared

towards savings for college. The expectation for my brothers and me was that we aspire to

PSA, which presumes PSE and for which PSE is a by-product. My curiosity focuses on (a)

what my great-grandfather's aspiration and need were such that, as a by-product of his PSA,

he established for succeeding generations the expectation of PSE and PSA, and (b) what a

2012 conversation about student aspirations between him and TRIO students from Caldwell

County might look like.

Data Collection Procedures

In the data-collection phase, the study drew on the U.S. laws enacted between 1964 and 2008 that authorized TRIO programs and that have already been presented in this paper. The data collected and presented on U.S. laws are arranged to focus on the periods of 1964 – 2002 and 2003 – 2011, the latter of which coincides with new TRIO students' writing of their TFGCS. The study drew on educational attainment in Caldwell County; data from 2010 – 2011 on TRIO students in Caldwell County including such measures as gender, age, income status, and family educational background; and statements written by TRIO students in Caldwell County at or near the point of their enrolling in a TRIO program. Appendix L presents data on TRIO students in Caldwell County in 2010 – 2011, the last full year of the study's focus.

The qualitative data collection drew from students' texts written in the calendar years 2003 - 2011. The TRIO programs at CCC&TI enroll participants at any point in the calendar year. Although the program year for TRIO programs begins on September 1 and roughly coincides with the academic year, there is substantial spillover at CCC&TI outside the program year in enrolling new TRIO students. For example, students who plan to enroll in college in the fall semester often complete their applications for TRIO/SSS and the required TFGCS in late spring or summer and are officially enrolled on September 1. Although most TRIO/ETS participants enroll in the program in the fall of their 6th-grade year, approximately 3% (CCC&TI, 2011) of the TRIO/ETS students served annually enroll at other points in the calendar year.

The study focused on Caldwell County, where both TRIO programs operate. TRIO/SSS has served students on the Watauga campus since 1998. Because of the

TRIO/ETS program established at Lees-McRae College in 1994, secondary school students in Watauga County were already receiving TRIO/ETS services at the time that CCC&TI secured the grant to establish its own TRIO/ETS program in 2001. The 41 statements written by the 101 TRIO/SSS students from CCC&TI's Watauga campus were removed from the sample that was analyzed.

Participant Selection

From the 2002 -2003 to the 2010 - 2011 school years, TRIO/ETS and TRIO/SSS at CCC&TI served 7,310 participants (duplicated count). The corresponding unduplicated number of participants is 2,542, which comprises 1607 TRIO/ETS and 935 TRIO/SSS. Of the 935 TRIO/SSS participants, 834 enrolled in the program on the Caldwell County campus, with the remaining 101 enrolling on the Watauga County campus. Thus, 2,441 TRIO participants, unduplicated, participated in CCC&TI's TRIO programs in Caldwell County from 2003 – 2011. It is this population from which the written statements were drawn for analysis. As noted in the previous section on data collection procedures, data on the participants in 2010 – 2011, the last full year of the study's focus, are included as a description of the population engaged in the PSE and PSA programs in Caldwell County.

All 2,441 students were invited at the start point of their TRIO experience to write and submit their TFGCS for the CCC&TI collection of statements, and 940 chose to do so. The TFGCS form includes the statement, "submitting your story implies permission to reproduce." Appendix M presents the TFGCS form and its written invitation. In addition, the researcher secured in writing the support of the institution's president to analyze the TFGCS in the study. Appendix N presents his letter of support.

TRIO staff members extend the invitation through conversations with students and through presenting the TFGCS form to them. The conversations entail two parts. First, TRIO staff members remind students that their statements are not only for their own use but also for other people to read. TRIO staff members counsel and encourage students to write sensitively, such that they would be comfortable with anyone reading their narratives. Second, staff members offer prompts by posing such questions as why students want to go to college or to complete college, if students have dreams and concerns for their futures and, if so, what those dreams and concerns are, and how students envision college as a tool in achieving dreams and addressing concerns.

The TFGCS range from one sentence to six paragraphs in length. Each TFGCS is dated. The 940 TFGCS have been scanned into PDF files and are collected in two sets with 414 statements from TRIO/ETS students and 526 statements from TRIO/SSS students in Caldwell County. Each set is arranged alphabetically by first name. For the current study, I removed each student's name and replaced it with a number. This step reduced the possibility of my recognizing students and treating their statements differently from a wholly anonymous writer.

For the study, I determined two criteria for selecting the sample such that meaningful narrative analysis could be conducted. The first criterion was that the TFGCS be legible in its PDF form. The second criterion was that the statement be at least two sentences.

In the early years, new TRIO participants wrote their statements voluntarily, in response to the invitation extended. Later, students wrote their statements as a part of the application for TRIO/SSS (beginning in 2007) or as a curriculum activity administered to all new TRIO/ETS 6th-grade students (beginning in 2009). For the current study, the researcher

generated a proportional stratified random sample through collapsing the data from the early

years into a "voluntary" stratum and creating "required" strata for the subsequent years.

According to Antonius (2003), "a sample faithfully representing such proportions is called a

proportional stratified random sample. Statistics calculated on a proportional stratified

random sample can be readily generalized to the population" (p. 113).

Table 6 presents the proportional stratified random sample by program and across the

voluntary and required strata. Included in the table are the sample sizes that were generated,

based on a 10% (94 statements) sample.

Table 6

Proportional Stratified Random Sample

Year Written	Voluntary (Sample)	Required (Sample)
	TRIO/ETS	
2003 - 2008	175 (18)	
2009		103 (10)
2010		82 (8)
2011		54 (5)
Total	175 (18)	239 (23)
	TRIO/SSS	
2003 - 2006	98 (10)	
2007		109 (11)
2008		74 (8)
2009		80 (8)
2010		83 (8)
2011		82 (8)
Total	98 (10)	428 (43)

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward

Bound; ETS = Educational Talent Search; SSS = Student Support Services.

All samples are 10% of the total collected writings from the voluntary and required groups.

Adapted from Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, 2012.

Data Analysis

Grounded theorists' work informed the data analysis for the grounded theory research study. Scholars speak to the importance of research participants' own words (Birks & Mills, 2011; Borgatti, n.d.; Creswell, 2012) and to open coding (Birks & Mills, 2011; Borgatti, n.d.). Glaser (1978) presents open coding as "diametrically contrasted with a preconceived code for which the data may be coded, irrespective of the degree of relevance, which itself is hard to determine" (p. 56). Glaser (1978) also articulates four rules of open coding which are presented in the following passage. Glaser's italicized phrases are retained as he wrote them. According to Glaser (1978):

> The first rule is to ask a set of questions of the data which must be kept in mind from the start. The most general question is "*What is this* [*sic*] *data the study of?*"....
>
> The next vital question is to continually ask when studying field notes is, *"What category does this incident indicate?"*....
>
> Lastly the analyst asks continually: *"What is actually happening in the data?"*....
>
> The second rule is to *analyze the data line by line*, constantly coding each sentence….
>
> The line by line approach raises another problem the resolution for which we have a third, offsetting rule. It is painstaking and timetaking to code carefully, *the analyst must do his* [*sic*] *own coding*….

Another important, vital fourth rule is to *always interrupt coding to memo the idea*, in order to reap the subtle rewards of the constant input from reading the data carefully and from asking of it the above questions. (pp. 57-58)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) speak to the emergence of categories from the data and the relationships among categories in positing that the "comparison of differences and similarities among groups not only generates categories, but also rather speedily generates generalized relations among them" (p. 39).

Glaser (1978) offers guidance on identification of a core category that drives the analysis. According to Glaser (1978), the core variable emerges from the data as the principal theme:

First of all, the analyst should consciously look for a core variable when coding his [*sic*] data. As he [*sic*] constantly compares incidents and concepts he [*sic*] will generate many codes, while being alert to the one or two that are core. He [*sic*] is constantly looking for the "main theme," for what—in their view—is the main concern or problem for the people in the setting, for what sums up in a pattern of behavior the substance of what is going on in the data, for what is the relevance reflected in the data. (p. 94)

For the emergent grounded theory research project, I drew on the work since 1967 of various grounded theorists, as noted above, to conduct the iterative data analysis through three steps, as follows:

1. I read the 94 TFGCS that were generated through the proportional stratified random sample, took notes on each statement, and reread my notes. My guiding question was, "What are new TRIO students saying in their written statements?"

2. Through a rereading of my notes, I coded the texts. In this step, I followed Glaser's (1978, pp. 57-58) four rules for open coding, stayed attuned to the categories that emerge, and identified the core category. In this step, I built my coding scheme to apply in Step 3. I suspended data analysis for a one-week period between Steps 2 and 3 in an effort to adhere to Glaser's (1978) mandate for the researcher: "to remain open to what is happening" (p. 3).

3. After the full week passed, I returned to the original data – the 94 written statements – and applied the coding scheme developed in Step 2, asking of the data such questions as how often codes appear and by whom (younger or older students). Through applying the coding scheme developed in Step 2, I presented the structure of the data as the skeleton of the substantive grounded theory that the study sought to develop.

The final step in developing grounded theory is to write the theory. In their early work, Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as:

An inductive method of theory development. To make theoretical sense of so much diversity in his data, the analyst is forced to develop ideas on a level of generality higher in conceptual abstraction than the qualitative material being analyzed. He [*sic*] is forced to bring out underlying uniformities and

diversities, and to use more abstract concepts to account for differences in the

data. (p. 114)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) distinguish between substantive theory and formal theory

in grounded theory research. Because of its grounding in raw data, the current study

generated substantive grounded theory. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967),

If the analyst starts with raw data, he [*sic*] will end up initially with a

substantive theory: a theory for the substantive area on which he [*sic*] has

done research (for example, patient care or gang behavior). If he [*sic*] starts

with the findings drawn from many studies pertaining to an abstract

sociological category, he [*sic*] will end up with a formal theory. (p. 114)

Corbin and Holt (2005) and Borgatti (n.d.) address the writing of grounded theory

with regard to the difficulty of writing and the style of writing. According to Corbin and

Holt (2005),

Writing up a grounded theory is perhaps more difficult than writing up

conventional research because there are no specific guidelines. What is

important is capturing the essence of participants' stories while at the same

time presenting those stories within a logical framework that give insight and

understanding into possible meanings. (p. 52)

Borgatti (n.d.) draws a similarity between writing grounded theory and writing a

story. According to Borgatti (n.d.), "I believe grounded theory draws from literary analysis,

and one can see it here. The advice for building theory parallels advice for writing a story.

Selective coding is about finding the driver that impels the story forward" (para. 21).

The iterative design of grounded theory research, in which data are analyzed more than once through open coding, identifying categories of codes, and the core category, introduces the question of when the researcher has completed his or her study. Trochim (2006) offers counsel on this question and on what the result is:

> When does this process end? One answer is: never! Clearly, the process described above could continue indefinitely. Grounded theory doesn't have a clearly demarcated point for ending a study. Essentially, the project ends when the researcher decides to quit.
>
> What do you have when you're finished? Presumably you have an extremely well-considered explanation for some phenomenon of interest -- the grounded theory. This theory can be explained in words and is usually presented with much of the contextually relevant detail collected. (para. 9-10)

It is an "extremely well-considered explanation" (Trochim, 2006, para. 10) of new TRIO students' aspirations and needs at the start point of their participation in TRIO that I sought to develop and to present through the substantive grounded theory generated in the study.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Corbin and Holt (2005) address specifically the inclusion in grounded theory of concepts that emerge from multiple sources and triangulation as an element in demonstrating trustworthiness:

> In grounded theory, concepts are derived from multiple sources of qualitative data. They include narrative interviews, observations, documents, biographies, videos, photographs and any combination of these. Gathering

data on the same topic through a variety of means is a way of validating

research findings through triangulation. (p. 50)

To counter researcher bias and reactivity, two of the eight threats to validity that

Maxwell (2005, p. 105) identifies in qualitative research, I leveraged the long-term

involvement I have with the TRIO programs and students, the rich data residing in annual

surveys of TRIO students and in the TRIO newsletters that they write, and the opportunities

for triangulation that evidence presented through sources beyond the TFGCS provided.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the methodology employed in the current study. Drawing

on work by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978, 1992) and others (Birks & Mills, 2011;

Borgatti, n.d.; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Corbin & Holt, 2005; Creswell, 2012; Patton,

2002), this review of the methodology describes how substantive theory grounded in the data

was developed through iterations of data analysis in order to illuminate the three research

questions that the study sought to address.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the aspirations and needs of TRIO students through an examination of themes that emerge from TRIO students' narratives, called TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS). Students' TFGCS are written at the point of their entry into a TRIO program for postsecondary enrollment (PSE) or postsecondary degree attainment (PSA). The examination was conducted within the context of the purposes of TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What themes emerge from TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS), and what do they reveal about aspiration and need?

2. What is the relationship between the emergent themes and the purposes of the TRIO programs?

3. Do these themes support the purposes of the TRIO programs, as the programs have evolved?

The methodology employed in the study is grounded theory research. The study followed an emergent design of grounded theory research as introduced by Glaser (1978). The innovation in this study was its focus on students' perspectives at the start point of their TRIO experience and the opportunity this focus represents for better understanding *who* TRIO students are. The grounded theory research in this study comprised reviewing data captured from TRIO students' stories of their perspectives on the future, their needs in the present, and their perceptions of the role that PSE and PSA might play in achieving their articulated aspirations and meeting their articulated needs.

Various elements are presented in this portion of the study. These elements comprise an analysis of the evolution of TRIO programs from 1964 – 2008; the results of the exploration of a proportional stratified random sample of TFGCS, including the presentation of themes that were revealed; and the articulation of the substantive grounded theory that emerges from the analyses of TRIO programs' evolution and the TFGCS narratives. Results of the exploration of the TFGCS sample are linked to the analysis of the evolution of TRIO programs.

Participants

The qualitative research in this study was grounded in the statements written by many different individuals at the start point of the common experience of enrolling in a TRIO program at CCC&TI. Included in Chapter 3 of this study are descriptive statistics about the community in which CCC&TI is situated and about the student population at CCC&TI—a population that is reflective of the community. Presented in this section are descriptive statistics about the 94 students whose TFGCS constituted the proportional stratified random sample analyzed as part of the grounded theory research.

Of the 94 TFGCS used in this study, 41 TFGCS were written by students, ages 11 – 18 years, at the start point of their participation in the TRIO/ETS program. The remaining 53 were written by students, ages 17 – 59 years, at or near the point of entry into the TRIO/SSS program. Presented in Table 7 are statistics about these 41 students entering the TRIO/ETS program. These data include the age, gender, ethnicity, and the three eligibility measures for TRIO/ETS (first-generation college, low-income, and other – no criterion). Also presented in Table 7 are statistics about these 53 students entering the TRIO/SSS program. These data

include age, gender, ethnicity, and the three eligibility measures for TRIO/SSS (first-

generation college, low-income, and students with disabilities).

Table 7

Numbers (and Percentages) for TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS) from TRIO/ETS (n = 41), TRIO/SSS (n = 53), and Total (n = 94)

Demographic	TRIO/ETS	TRIO/SSS	Total
Age in Years			
11	21 (51.2)	0	21 (22.3)
12	10 (24.4)	0	10 (10.6)
13	5 (12.2)	0	5 (5.3)
14	3 (7.3)	0	3 (3.2)
15	0	0	0
16	0	0	0
17	1 (2.4)	2 (3.7)	3 (3.2)
18	1 (2.4)	8 (15.1)	9 (9.6)
19	0	3 (5.7)	3 (3.2)
20-29	0	13 (24.5)	13 (13.8)
30-39	0	15 (28.3)	15 (16.0)
40-49	0	6 (11.3)	6 (6.4)
50-59	0	6 (11.3)	6 (6.4)
Gender			
Male	17 (41.5)	16 (30.2)	33 (35.1)
Female	24 (58.5)	37 (69.8)	61 (64.9)
Ethnicity			
White	38 (92.7)	48 (90.6)	86 (91.5)
Black	2 (4.9)	3 (5.7)	5 (5.3)
Multiracial	0	2 (3.8)	2 (2.1)
Hispanic	1 (2.4)	0	1 (1.1)
First-Generation, Low-Income, Disabilities, and Other Characteristics			
First-Generation and Low-Income	21 (51.2)	48 (90.6)	69 (73.4)
First-Generation Only	6 (14.6)	3 (5.7)	9 (9.6)
Low-Income Only	9 (22.0)	2 (3.8)	11 (11.7)
Disabilities	0	0	0
Other- No Criterion	5 (12.2)	0	5 (5.3)

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent Search; SSS = Student Support Services.

Evident in these statistics is the 10-point drop in male participation from the younger group (TRIO/ETS) to the older group (TRIO/SSS). Evident, too, is a 40-point increase in first-generation college and low-income students from the younger group to the older group. These students reflect the community.

Results

The results from the current study are presented in two parts. The first part comprises an analysis of the evolution of TRIO programs from 1964 – 2008. The second part comprises results of the grounded theory research on the 94 TFGCS and the substantive grounded theory that emerged from the exploration of the 94 statements. As discussed in Chapter 3, a substantive grounded theory emerges from raw data, which, in this study, are the TFGCS.

Analysis of the evolution of TRIO programs. This section presents findings from the analysis of the evolution of TRIO programs since their inception almost 50 years ago. This evolution was described in Chapter 2 of this study and excerpts from the HEA of 1965 and its amendments are presented with the researcher's commentary in Appendices B – K.

As noted in Chapter 2, the USED (2012b) states that the "history of TRIO is progressive" (para. 1). The brief review of TRIO's history, as presented in U.S. law and which constitutes a portion of Chapter 2 of this paper, indicates, in my view, that more apt descriptors might be "broadening" and "extending" rather than progressive. I see this broadening, or extending, along five dimensions and as evident over the near half-century of TRIO programs' evolution.

First, TRIO has broadened the term "disadvantaged students" from one focusing on "exceptional financial need" (HEA of 1965). The term now includes physical disability; cultural, financial, and academic need; and limited English proficiency (Appendix G).

Second, TRIO has broadened and extended the age ranges of targeted populations. From the pilot Upward Bound programs serving high school students, TRIO reaches students as young as 11 years old through the Talent Search program. Educational Opportunity Centers, SSS, and McNair serve older students, including veterans, beyond the high school ages of the original Upward Bound programs. In the sample of TFGCS analyzed in the current study, 21 (52.1%) of the 41 TRIO/ETS statements were written by students who were 11 years old. Of the 53 TRIO/SSS statements, 6 (11.3%) were written by students between the ages of 50 – 59 years.

Third, TRIO programs have broadened the levels of education beyond the high school focus of the early Upward Bound programs. Educational Opportunity Centers may serve adults, and Talent Search serves youth who have completed no more than fifth grade. At the highest educational level, McNair serves students through attainment of their doctoral degrees. In the current study, 53 (56.4%) of the TFGCS in the sample were written by students at the college level—that is, students participating in the TRIO/SSS program.

Fourth, TRIO programs have extended the list of specifically targeted populations to include veterans, students with disabilities, first-generation college students, low-income students, students with limited English proficiency, homeless students, students in foster care, and students from other groups under-represented in higher education. In the sample of 94 TFGCS, 78 (83.0%) were written by students who meet the first-generation college criterion; 80 (85.1%) were written by students who meet the low-income criterion.

Fifth, TRIO programs have broadened their focus from college-access and college-success services to a focus on program outcomes and personal accountability. Over time, the focus of the TRIO programs has changed to echo the current discourse concerning college completion and degree attainment. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (Appendix K), the most recent reauthorization of the HEA of 1965, required the provision of financial and economic literacy services to TRIO students and signaled a shift from access to financial aid to personal accountability for managing finances (Appendix K). The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 signaled an evolution, too, in the arena of program outcomes. For example, the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 introduced the new requirement that Talent Search, a program dedicated since 1965 to PSE, report on the PSA of Talent Search participants for up to six years after their high school graduations. In accord with the new requirement and in the 2010 competition for a new Talent Search grant, CCC&TI included the following and required wording as an objective, where only the percentage stated was left to the judgment of CCC&TI personnel (CCC&TI, 2010):

> Postsecondary attainment: 50% of participants served during the project year, who enrolled in an institution of higher education, by the fall semester immediately following high school graduation or by the next academic semester (e.g., spring semester) as a result of acceptance but deferred enrollment, will complete a program of postsecondary education within six years.

Through the broadening and extending of TRIO programs since their genesis in 1964, these federal services have opened opportunities in three important ways that are not being vigorously developed in or by the TRIO community. First, TRIO has opened opportunities

not only for the individual participants *within* each program, but also for individual

participants *across* programs. In concept, an 11 year-old child entering middle school can

participate in TRIO through completion of her doctorate at 60 years old. Second, TRIO has

opened opportunities for individuals *within* families and *across* generations of one family to

participate simultaneously in PSE and PSA programs. In concept, a grandfather, his

children, and his grandchildren can all participate at the same time in TRIO, with the

potential for shifting their conversation about PSE and PSA *from* their classrooms *to* their

family dinner table. In one TFGCS analyzed for the current study and as an illustration of

the opportunities for simultaneous participation in PSE and PSA programs, the young author

wrote, "I am 11 years old. I first learned about TRIO when my cousin went on a trip to

Harvard." Third, TRIO has opened opportunities for younger and older students to sustain a

focus on their futures—often their distant futures—through uninterrupted college-access and

college-success services targeting PSE and PSA. Students' aspirations for their futures are

assets that TRIO participants bring with them into their programs and that constitute largely

untapped resources that could be leveraged for program refinements and greater student

success.

In presenting the findings of the broadening and extending of TRIO programs along

the five dimensions and in articulating three ways in which opportunities opened through

TRIO programs are not being vigorously developed, I neither can nor do speak to the intent

of the U.S. Congress in passing legislation to create and to authorize TRIO programs.

Rather, I speak to the findings that emerged from my review of legislation and from my

exploration of TRIO students' narratives. As noted in Chapter 2, Engstrom and Tinto (2008)

argue that college access alone is insufficient and posit the importance of services to support

students in being successful in postsecondary studies. The findings from the current study

that pertain to support for students over time and across educational levels reflect the

Engstrom and Tinto (2008) research and its argument for sustained services.

      Emergent themes from grounded theory research. The first research question that

guided the current study asks what themes emerge from the TFGCS and what these themes

reveal about aspiration and need. Themes that emerged from the grounded theory research

on the 94 TFGCS reveal both aspiration and need in speaking to the abstract (for example, a

dream) and to the concrete (for example, a job with benefits). The themes that emerged from

the analysis of the TFGCS also speak to two levels—the self and the family. Table 8

presents a summary of the most common themes that emerged from the research.

Table 8

Examples of the Numbers (and Percentages) of Themes at the Self and Family Levels for

TRIO/ETS (n = 41), TRIO/SSS (n = 53), and Total (n = 94) Participants

Theme	TRIO/ETS	TRIO/SSS	Total
Self: Goal, Dream	32 (78.0)	17 (32.1)	49 (52.1)
"My dream is to become a plastic surgeon. This is my dream and I think it will come true."			
Family: Honor, Exemplar	7 (17.1)	15 (28.3)	22 (23.4)
"Here I am in remembrance of my mom." "To set a good example for my children as well."			
Self: Money	10 (24.4)	8 (15.1)	18 (19.1)
"I would like a high paying job." "I am going to college to get a degree and receive a great job with good pay and benefits."			
Family: Money	2 (4.9)	9 (17.0)	11 (11.7)
"Get a degree so that I could provide the kind of life I wanted my children to have."			
Self: Purpose in Life	2 (4.9)	7 (13.2)	9 (9.6)
"Each day that I am able to attend classes brings me a step closer to who I want to be and it gives me a reason to push myself and to believe that I have a purpose in life."			

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward

Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent

Search; SSS = Student Support Services.

As discussed in the data analysis section in Chapter 3, Glaser (1978, p. 94) guides researchers to a sustained search for the "main theme" or "core category" that emerges. The main theme that emerged from the grounded theory research in the current study was the abstract level of the self's dream or goal. The next most common theme focused on family at an abstract level of honoring prior generations and providing an exemplar for succeeding generations. The third most common theme focused again on the self, and specifically the individual's, concrete financial needs. The fourth most common theme returned, again, to the family, and, in this case, its concrete financial needs. The fifth most common theme reflected the deeply personal notions of "purpose in life" and "reason to belong." In summary, the emergent themes present a pattern across the 94 narratives of self-family-self-family-self across abstract and concrete levels. Table 9 illustrates the most indicative examples of these major themes. These examples were selected by the researcher.

Evident in the major themes presented in Table 9 are differences between the younger (TRIO/ETS) and older (TRIO/SSS) groups of students. While the younger TRIO/ETS students' narratives primarily focused on the self (goals, money), the older TRIO/SSS students' narratives focused on both the self (goals) and the family (honor, money). Table 10 presents these differences that constitute an important finding of the study and could inform TRIO programs at the policy, program management, and research levels.

Table 9

Illustrations of Themes from TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS), Written by New TRIO Students at Their Point of Entry

Theme	Illustration from TFGCS
Self: Goal, Dream	"Once I get my associates degree I want to go to UNC Chapel Hill to earn my bachelors degree in biology. I will do everything possible to earn my masters degree in biology at the one and only UNC."
	"When I am at college I will attempt to go 4 years with at least an average GPA of 3.2."
	"I want to end up being a doctor obgyn, my dream job. I also want to learn a few more languages. Not to mention to become a professional cook."
	"My ultimate goal is to get my life and family stable. I want to travel and volunteer my services to those less fortunate."
Family: Honor, Exemplar	"I would like to accomplish this goal not only for me but for the many generations that have yet to have their chance at college."
	"I want to let my family recognize that they can too start on their dreams and to find what goals they have inside."
	"I have older siblings and I have saw [*sic*] a lot of things I don't want to turn out to be. I know that if I have a degree and get a good stable job I will be happy with my life."
	"My mom passed away unexpectedly two years ago on ...[a] She would've been very proud of me for deciding to come to college."
Self: Money	"I decided to go to college many years ago when I learnt that people made more money."
	"I want to go to college because I want to have a great job. I don't really care what kind of career it is as long as it is good paying."
	"I hope and pray that I will make something of myself and get a white-collared job instead of blue-collar work. I plan to have a good paying job after I graduate college, so I can enjoy life more with my family."
	"My job downsized due to jobs going overseas…I knew I had to get another career because who knows how long that one is going to last."
Family: Money	"I want to have a career and be able to provide for my family."
	"Sometimes I wonder if I can go to college because of our financial problems. I try to get in as many sports as I can and overcome my shyness so I can one day get a scholarship to help pay for college."
	"In 197-[a] when I was sixteen years old, I had to quit high school and begin helping with the financial support of my family. I went to work with my mom at a shoe plant and also worked on a farm. In later years, I worked at a leather plant and was laid off from it in 199-[a]."
	"College is the only choice I have. I need a good education so I can take the best care possible of my kids."
Self: Purpose in Life	"I am so glad that I am in TRIO/ETS because I am really smart but I might not think that."
	"To start with, I want to feel better about myself. I've been a housewife for ten years. I love my family, but I feel like I'm getting nowhere."
	"I've had so many people tell me that I cannot do anything with my life and I want to prove them wrong."
	"School is very important to me, and it gives me a reason to belong."

Note. These excerpts are representative statements from 16 of the 94 TFGCS in the sample. [a]In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the researcher removed all identifying dates from the TFGCS.

Table 10

Frequency of Themes at the Self and Family Levels for TRIO/ETS (n = 41), TRIO/SSS (n = 53), and Total (n = 94) Participants

Position	TRIO/ETS	TRIO/SSS	Total
First	Self: Goal	Self: Goal	Self: Goal
Second	Self: Money	Family: Honor, Exemplar	Family: Honor, Exemplar
Third	Family: Honor, Exemplar	Family: Money	Self: Money
Forth	Family: Money	Self: Money	Family: Money
Fifth	Self: Purpose	Self: Purpose	Self: Purpose

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent Search; SSS = Student Support Services.

The grounded theory research on the 94 TFGCS in the sample revealed that nine higher-education institutions were named as desired places for study. Eighteen TRIO/ETS students named the following institutions, in descending order of frequency: Appalachian State University, Duke University, CCC&TI, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC State University, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Lipscomb University, Ohio State University, and West Point. One TRIO/SSS student named Appalachian State University as the desired transfer institution after completing studies at CCC&TI. In 11 cases, a specific degree (Associate, Bachelor, Master's, PhD) was named. In addition, students named "two year degree," "four year degree," "doctor," and "ob-gyn" as their goals.

The second research question that guided the current study asks what the relationship is between these emergent themes and the purposes of the TRIO programs. The purposes of

the TRIO/ETS and TRIO/SSS programs that were the focus of this study are detailed in

Appendices C-K and are presented in abbreviated form in the conceptual framework for the

current study. TRIO/ETS' three purposes are, in abbreviated form, to identify youth

qualified for postsecondary study, to publicize the availability of financial aid, and to

encourage high school dropouts to complete a secondary school program and enroll in

postsecondary studies. TRIO/SSS' four purposes are, in abbreviated form, to support the

retention (persistence) and graduation rate of TRIO/SSS participants; to increase the transfer

rate of participants from two- to four-year institutions; to foster an institutional climate

supportive of first-generation college, low-income students, and students with disabilities;

and to increase the economic and financial literacy of TRIO/SSS participants.

The emergent themes from the TFGCS that speak to the individual as "self" relate to

the purposes of the TRIO programs. The themes that speak to "family" do not relate to the

purposes of the TRIO programs. Rather, these "family" themes extend beyond the purposes

of the TRIO programs. The analysis presented in Chapter 5 addresses the extension of the

family themes.

As presented in Chapter 2, and as noted in the conceptual framework for the current

study, TRIO programs are required to provide assurances to the U.S. Department of

Education each year. The assurance common to all types of TRIO programs is that two-

thirds of program participants meet the first-generation college and low-income criteria. The

analysis of the 94 TFGCS for this grounded theory research revealed pride in and excitement

about being current or future first-generation college students. Twenty-six (16 TRIO/ETS

and 10 TRIO/SSS) of the TFGCS included a statement about being a first-generation college

student. Table 11 presents excerpts from the TFGCS that illustrate the writers' sentiments about being the first student in the family to go to college.

Table 11

Excerpts from TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS) Regarding Being a First-Generation College Student

TRIO Program of Writer	Illustration from TFGCS
TRIO/ETS	"Being the first generation to go to college in my family would be so cool!"
TRIO/ETS	"I'm really excited and everyone is really proud of me. The only bad thing is that I'm in 6th grade and I can't wait to go to college but I still have to wait a while."
TRIO/ETS	"I am excited about going to college. My sisters, my brother and I have always been encouraged by our parents to go to college because their chances were limited. I have a large family and my mother did think college was important but never had the money."
TRIO/SSS	"Being the first generation in my family is a great accomplishment for me and my family. My parents have always pushed me to do well in school and I thank them for that. Going to college is very special because some aren't as lucky to get in or have the money to pay for it. I am very blessed and proud that I am the first generation to go to college."
TRIO/SSS	"But I feel wonderful about being the first generation college student, feel very confident and eager to learn all I can."
TRIO/SSS	"When I was asked if I was a first generation college student, I had to ask what the question meant. Since finding out, I am very pleased to know I fit that title. Some days I feel like I am too late to be here and that's when I tell myself, 'But I *am* here!'"
TRIO/SSS	"The opportunity to be a first-generation college student is a chance I never expected to have. My income is so far below poverty level and I did not know there were programs to help me until this year."
TRIO/SSS	"As a first generation college student there are a lot of expectations placed on me, but those I have for myself far exceed those of others."

Note. These excerpts are representative statements from eight of the 94 TFGCS in the sample. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; SSS = Student Support Services; ETS = Educational Talent Search.

The third research question guiding the current study is whether or not the emergent themes support the purposes of TRIO programs, as these programs have evolved from 1964 - 2008. The evolution of TRIO programs has been one of extending opportunity and broadening postsecondary study, as described earlier in this chapter. The emergent themes from the analysis of the TFGCS reflect the purposes of TRIO programs, as they have evolved. As the excerpts in Table 9 illustrate, the emergent themes indicate that young students aspire to enroll in college and to maintain strong grade point averages, that young students aspire to earn graduate degrees, and that older students aspire to complete college for a variety of reasons, including wanting "to travel and volunteer my services to those less fortunate" and taking "the best possible care of my kids."

Substantive grounded theory. The grounded theory research conducted in the current study discovered themes that are resident in and that emerged from the 94 TFGCS. Grounded in the raw data of the 94 TFGCS, the substantive grounded theory is stated here.

Themes emerge from the TRIO First-Generation College Statements (TFGCS) which reveal students' aspirations, needs, goals, challenges, difficulties, hopes, and dreams. The emergent themes reflect the individual student in two ways--as "self" and as part of "family"—and at two levels—the abstract and the concrete. These themes support the purposes of the TRIO programs as the programs have evolved. These themes also extend beyond the purposes of the TRIO programs in ways that describe reality for new TRIO students at the start point of their TRIO program experiences and that can benefit TRIO participants and TRIO programs.

As was presented in Chapter 2, various scholars speak to the theme of extending beyond PSE or PSA, though their work pertains not specifically to TRIO programs, but,

rather, to broader populations. Walpole (2007) posits that students' aspirations are "critical to eventual [postsecondary degree] attainment and subsequently to other outcomes as well, including income and careers" (p. 53). Sellar et al. (2011) speak to the importance of aspirations not as an end point at PSE or PSA, but, rather, as a guide to the imagined futures that PSE or PSA can help shape. Tinto's (1975) concept of intrinsic rewards underscores the individual's wishes for his or her development beyond the extrinsic rewards of grades and course completion.

Summary

Chapter 4 has presented the findings of the grounded theory research through describing the participants and presenting the findings from the study. Chapter 5 comprises an analysis of the findings through linking them to the literature, stating limitations to the current study, and revisiting the conceptual framework on which the study was based. In a look to the future, Chapter 5 includes a statement of implications of the research for various audiences and the articulation of areas for possible future research.

Chapter 5: Analysis

Following the presentation of findings in Chapter 4, the focus of Chapter 5 is the analysis of these findings. First, the major findings are analyzed and are considered in light of the literature review presented in Chapter 2. Second, the gap in the literature that was identified in Chapter 2 is considered anew in light of the findings. Third, the limitations to the study are articulated. Next, I revisit the conceptual framework, its application in the current study, and adaptations that could be made to the conceptual framework in applying it to future studies. Fifth is a statement of the study's implications for various audiences. Sixth is an articulation of areas for further research to which the current study points.

Analysis—Literature Links

With the federal TRIO programs approaching the half-century milestone since their founding, this study explored what students envision at the start point of their TRIO experience. Through focusing on the start point—students' entry into a TRIO program—the study revealed how the purposes of TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law, are and are not related to students' perspectives on their futures. Three fields of literature were reviewed in Chapter 2. The first field is the U.S. legislation that articulates the purposes of TRIO programs and governs their implementation. The second field is the discourse on disadvantaged students, of whom the participants in TRIO programs constitute a subset. The third field is students' aspirations. The two fields of literature that grounded the study are U.S. legislation and students' aspirations, and the analysis of findings in this chapter is linked

primarily to these two fields of literature. In addition, the analysis of findings addresses one aspect of the discourse on disadvantaged students—that is, first-generation college—because of its salience as a topic that emerged through the research on the TRIO First-Generation College Statement (TFGCS) sample.

An element in the analysis of the evolution of TRIO programs, as evidenced through U.S. law, is the concomitant increase in the appropriation of federal funds to TRIO. According to the Council for Opportunity in Education (2013), the federal dollars channeled to TRIO grew from $6 million in 1965, which corresponds to the initial year of funding for the first Upward Bound programs, to $879 million in 2011, which corresponds to the last year encompassed in the current study. When adjusted for inflation, $879 million yields $123 million in 1965 dollars (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). The inflation-adjusted figure of $123 million for 2011 represents more than 20 times the initial appropriation of $6 million and adds an important insight in the presentation of the evolution of TRIO programs.

The analysis of the major findings presented in Chapter 4 uncovered new information about the themes that emerged from the TFGCS, about what the themes revealed regarding aspiration and need, and about the relationship between the emergent themes and the purposes of the TRIO programs, as the programs have evolved. The four major findings are presented with commentary on linkages to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

1. Focus on the self in the abstract. The most important theme emerging from the TFGCS is a focus on the self in the abstract, through articulation of the individual's aspiration. Over one-half of the TFGCS identified dreams or goals. More precisely, of the 94 TFGCS in the sample, 49 (52.1%) spoke to a specific goal. The stated goals ranged from going to college for four years and earning a 3.2 GPA to becoming a plastic surgeon.

A principal tool in the design of the current study was St. Clair's (2004) aspirational myth as a guide to motivate students towards the end point at the completion of their courses. St. Clair (2004) called for research on applying the aspirational myth in settings other than adult education. For the current study in a TRIO setting, I built on St. Clair's argument for using the aspirational myth to envision the end point. I also shifted the focus to the *start* point of the journey towards the envisioned end point at PSE, PSA, or beyond.

Emerging from the data (TFGCS) collected and analyzed in the current study are linkages to other scholars' recommendations for research. Through the TFGCS, students were directly invited to state their aspirations and needs, which echoes the call by various scholars (Kennett et al., 2011; Sellar et al., 2011; Walpole, 2007) to ask students directly about their intentions and aspirations. In speaking to the optimism and hopefulness among the young students encountered in her research, Bok (2010) adumbrates the hopeful and forward-looking goals that surfaced in the research on the 94 TFGCS for the current study.

2. Focus on the family in the abstract. The second most important theme emerging from the TFGCS is a focus on family in the abstract, through articulation of the individual's desire to be a role model for other family members and an acknowledgment of prior and future generations. Almost one fourth of the TFGCS identified family as a reason for their being in college. Of the 94 TFGCS analyzed, 23.4% (22 statements) referenced a connection to family. Of these 22 TFGCS, 21 spoke to the desire to honor family through serving as an example or by embarking on the college journey that other family members were unable to undertake. The connection to family that one TFGCS referenced was of not wanting to follow the path of older siblings.

There is little in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 that relates to this important theme. Because TRIO programs serve individual students, as opposed to cohorts of students or communities of students or families, it is not surprising that the U.S. legislation governing TRIO programs resonates little, if at all, with the theme of focus on the family in the abstract. Only one of the TRIO programs speaks to the role of parents or family. Upward Bound, which provides intensive services to high-school students, addresses the family in that Upward Bound programs are expected to engage parents of high-school participants. According to the Higher Education Opportunity Act (2012) "the plan to work cooperatively with parents and key administrative, teaching, and counseling personnel at the target schools to achieve project objectives" (subpart D; §645.30-645.35) is one of the criteria in an Upward Bound program's plan of operation on which a grant proposal is judged.

As presented in the review of U.S. legislation governing TRIO (Chapter 2), the Education Amendments of 1980 provided a concrete definition of first-generation college student and, in so doing, referenced parents. However, the reference to parents was for guidance in managing TRIO programs and not for addressing the theme of focus on family in the abstract.

Tinto (2004) addresses the impact of family background *on* students in describing the "needs of first-generation college students who, unlike youth from college-educated families, may not have the same knowledge of how to successfully navigate postsecondary education" (p. 8). The emergent theme of focus on the family in the abstract speaks to students' hopes *for* their families, where the students actively envision positive futures for their families.

3. First-generation college as honor. The writers of the TFGCS expressed enthusiasm about being first-generation college students at present (TRIO/SSS) and in the

future (TRIO/ETS). Of the 94 TFGCS in the sample, 26 (27.7%) referred specifically to first-generation college and described being a first-generation college student as an honor, "an accomplishment," "awesome," "wonderful," and "cool." Evident in the TFGCS is a tone that differs from the tone of the literature on first-generation college students, where the terminology centers on barriers (Tym et al., 2004), obstacles (Walpole, 2007), and elements that constitute economically and educationally challenged students (Walpole, 2007).

As noted in Chapter 2, first-generation college status pertains to the required assurance that every TRIO program must make annually to the U.S. Department of Education. First-generation college does not appear in the purposes of TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law (Appendix G).

4. Extension beyond PSE and PSA. The themes emerging from the TFGCS extend along two axes and beyond the purposes of TRIO programs, as they have evolved. The first axis stretches from the focus of TRIO programs—that is, the individual student—to the individual's connection to the family, both prior and future generations. The second axis stretches from the objectives of TRIO programs—that is, PSE and PSA—to envisioned futures beyond PSE and PSA. There is little in the literature presented in Chapter 2 about TRIO programs that pertains to the extension beyond PSE and PSA in the ways identified through the analysis of the themes from students' narratives. That there is little in the literature about TRIO programs concerning to the extension beyond PSE and PSA is not surprising, in light of the U.S. legislative purposes of TRIO programs to promote PSE and PSA as the end point. As noted in Chapter 4, various scholars (Walpole, 2007; Sellar et al., 2011; Tinto, 1975) do speak to the theme of extension beyond PSE and PSA, though their research does not specifically target TRIO program participants.

Addressing the Gaps

The current study addressed a gap in the literature, as presented in Chapter 2. The gap is the scarcity of research on students' aspirations and needs for the future, as articulated at the start point of their participation in a TRIO college access or college success program. The findings from the current study contribute to reducing this gap in research. Over half (52.1%) of the TFGCS included individuals' specific goals, dreams, or aspirations at the start point of their participation in a program of support services for PSE or PSA.

A better understanding of these perspectives could illuminate new areas of service for the federal TRIO programs. The "extension beyond PSE and PSA" theme relates to PSE and PSA through identifying students' aspirations for the Associate, Bachelor, Master's, or Doctorate, for various careers, and for long-term family goals. This finding also offers insight into why students have identified specific goals and into how they articulate contingency plans for cases where they envision that a specific goal may not be met. As TRIO programs have evolved over the last 50 years, so, too, will they continue to evolve and could incorporate extensions beyond and related to PSE or PSA.

The findings from the current study examining "first-generation college as an honor" contribute to our understanding of individuals' thinking within the context of the established literature on access to and success in college. Rather than relegating the first-generation college status to a barrier or obstacle, the analysis of the TFGCS reveals that students draw strength from and take pride in the opportunity to be the first in their families to go to college. Rather than focusing on students' needs to be filled, the analysis of the TFGCS presents students' perspectives on being first-generation college as assets that motivate them for success. The difference in tone between the TFGCS finding on first-generation college

and the established literature is striking, where the former reflects excitement in moving towards envisioned futures, and the latter emphasizes the challenges of the past and present.

A better understanding of students' perspectives at their enrollment in a support program for PSE or PSA offers the opportunity to leverage students' early perspectives to more precisely tailor support programs closer to the end point of PSE or PSA. One TFGCS illustration from Table 9 identified one student's aspiration for the Associate degree, followed by Bachelor and Master's degrees in biology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Using this TFGCS as an example, TRIO program personnel could ensure that the student travels with TRIO to the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, that the student visits the biology department while there, that the student's high school curriculum plan includes the advanced courses necessary for acceptance at that institution, and that the student is offered tutoring or other appropriate services to maintain high grades and to increase the likelihood of acceptance for admission.

Limitations

While extending our understanding of the goals of first-generation college students, this study has three main limitations. The first limitation was the inconsistency in the staff members' spoken invitation for the students to share their perspectives on the TFGCS form. Because 16 different individuals introduced the TFGCS and presented the form in a variety of settings (for example, in classrooms, to groups of students, or to one student individually), the spoken invitation to write the TFGCS was not uniform. The second limitation was the presence in the sample of TFGCS that were written on a voluntary basis and TFGCS that were written as a requirement of a TRIO program, as described in Chapter 3. The third limitation is the study's focus on only two TRIO programs—TRIO/ETS and TRIO/SSS,

where, as noted in Appendix A, the annual, per-student expenditure is relatively small, compared to other TRIO programs. A more complete study would focus on all seven TRIO programs that serve students and would pay particular attention to Upward Bound, Veterans Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math and Science, and the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, where the annual, per-student expenditure is much higher than it is in either TRIO/ETS or TRIO/SSS. This third limitation in the current study constitutes an opportunity for further research.

Revisiting the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework designed for the study and presented in Chapter 2 was appropriate for the research in four ways, which are described in the following section. The conceptual framework introduced the concept of the start point—that is, the student's perspectives on the future articulated at the point of his or her entry into a program of support for PSE or PSA--as a central tool in the analysis.

First, themes emerged from the TFGCS that spoke to students' aspirations and needs and to the purposes of the TRIO programs. Second, the conceptual framework opened the way to envisioning an extended end point beyond PSE and PSA, and it accommodated the theme that emerged from students' narratives about their futures beyond PSE and PSA. Third, the inclusion of the assurances component in the conceptual framework—students as *what*—was appropriate and opened the way for the important theme of "first-generation college as honor" to emerge. Fourth, the emphasis on aspirations in the conceptual framework—students as *who*—was appropriate and added new insight into their hopes and envisioned futures for both their own lives and for their families' lives. Through the exploration of aspirations and needs at the start point, themes were revealed that contribute

new knowledge that can be applied both in research on PSE and PSA programs and in practices associated with managing and leading programs that target college access and college success.

A desired result for the current study was to illuminate what, if anything, students state about their aspirations and needs. Such illumination could well inform TRIO programs in the future. The findings of the study argue for the possibility of considering students' perspectives first, or, at minimum, in tandem with the purposes of the TRIO programs. How do students' perspectives inform the purposes of the TRIO programs? How might they inform those purposes in the future?

A guiding question for the current study was whether or not the themes emerging from the TFGCS support the purposes of the TRIO programs, as the programs have evolved. As noted in Chapter 4 and as restated in foregoing sections, the themes both support the purposes of the TRIO programs and extend beyond the purposes of the TRIO programs.

Beyond the consideration of how students' aspirations and needs relate to and support the purposes of the TRIO programs, the TFGCS data and the emergent themes uncover a different question: How do the purposes of the TRIO programs relate to and support the aspirations and needs of TRIO students? Might these aspirations and needs be important to consider in the articulation of the purposes of TRIO programs? Figure 3 presents the conceptual framework anew, with the added directional arrow illustrating the question just posed—that is, the idea of students' aspirations as an element informing the purposes of TRIO programs.

Figure 3

| Purposes, Per Law | Start Point | End Point | End Point, Extended |

Purposes, Per Law

TRIO/ETS
1. Identify youth and encourage for PSE
2. Publicize financial aid
3. Encourage drop-outs to re-enter for PSE

TRIO/SSS
1. Retention, graduation
2. Transfer
3. Supportive climate
4. Financial, economic literacy

Start Point

What?
Assurances

2/3 first-gen and low-income; 1/3 disabilities or first-gen or low-income or other

Who?
Aspirations

Goals, hopes, needs, fears, challenges, triumphs

End Point

PSE, PSA

PSE, PSA

Figure 3. Conceptual framework, revisited, for The start point: Students' aspirations at entry into a TRIO program. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent Search; SSS = Student Support Services; PSE = Postsecondary Enrollment; PSA = Postsecondary Attainment; first-gen = a first-generation college student is a "person neither of whose parents competed a baccalaureate degree" (Education Amendments of 1980, p. 1408). Figure compiled by the author.

In applying the conceptual framework in the future, this researcher would design a longitudinal study in order to follow students to ascertain whether or not the aspirations they articulated at the start point of their TRIO experience were realized. The conceptual framework could be adapted to accommodate such a study.

Implications

Findings from the current study carry implications for various audiences. The TRIO program personnel at CCC&TI benefit from a deeper understanding of the TRIO students they serve in Caldwell County. TRIO program personnel at other community colleges and at four-year institutions across North Carolina can learn from the findings of this research and can apply, as appropriate, elements of the research to their program management. Similarly, the findings revealed through the study carry value for TRIO program practitioners at any of the almost 3,000 TRIO programs across the U.S. The audiences named here—that is, TRIO staff members serving students—gain from understanding more about who TRIO students are, what their aspirations and needs are, and how those aspirations can be leveraged for stronger program outcomes. In the same way, program personnel with other support programs, such as GEAR UP and AVID, can learn from the findings of the current study.

For institutions that sponsor TRIO programs and whose student bodies include students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the findings of the study offer important insights. For example, institutions enrolling many first-generation college students might incorporate the "first-generation college as honor" theme in their programs and celebrations. Awareness of the themes that emerged from the analysis might promote greater attention to the power of the students' goals and dreams and a more precise alignment between what students want— whether a job, a degree, a specific program, or stability for their families, as the findings revealed—and the commitment of institutional resources. Understanding the theme of "extension beyond PSE and PSA" can reinforce institutions' awareness of PSE and PSA as the by-product that students gain on the way to realizing their envisioned futures.

For the policy community, there is value in reviewing the findings of the current study. The policy community, both within the federal government and in the policy advocacy arena, can benefit from the concise review of the 50-year evolution of TRIO programs in U.S. legislation and from the researcher's analysis of that evolution over its five dimensions of broadening and extending. In the context of national discourse on President Obama's 2020 goal, presented in Chapter 2, and associated conversations on college completion, a deeper understanding of TRIO programs and their impact is important. As discussions proceed towards the next re-authorization of the Higher Education Act of 1965, might the policy community consider the aspirations of TRIO students at the start point of their program participation?

For the TRIO community, the findings can be useful in positioning its PSE and PSA efforts; refining TRIO's purposes, as appropriate; and leveraging the strength of TRIO students' aspirations for the second half-century of TRIO programming. In presenting findings in Chapter 4, I identified three ways in which the manifold opportunities that TRIO has opened are not vigorously leveraged in the TRIO community. The themes that emerged from the grounded theory research on the TFGCS speak clearly to these three opportunities. The theme of "focus on the self in the abstract" reflects the opportunity for individual participants across programs. To fulfill an aspiration or achieve a dream, an individual may indeed need to participate in TRIO programs across the levels of secondary school, college, and into graduate school. The theme of "focus on the family in the abstract" underscores the heightened opportunity to connect with other family members through the shared experience of participating in TRIO programs. Family members of different generations who participate simultaneously in TRIO programs are living the connection to family and the aspiration that

one quarter of the TFGCS uncovered. The theme "extension beyond PSE and PSA" evokes

the third opportunity though continuing support over time. Achieving stated goals or filling

articulated needs often requires, from the start point, a sustained focus on a future beyond

PSE or PSA and for which college access and college success services are essential.

TRIO students who have written TFGCS, whether or not their TFGCS were included

in the sample, will gain from awareness of the findings of the research. How could students

not be inspired by the themes of "focus on self in the abstract" and "focus on the family in

the abstract" (see Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11)? How could students not be empowered by the

enthusiasm evident in the "first-generation college as honor" theme? What if TRIO

participants enrolled in programs proclaiming their first-generation college status not as a

barrier or a liability that harks to their pasts, but rather as an asset to be leveraged in creating

their (and their families') futures? Certainly the data – the 94 TFGCS – analyzed in the

current study indicate that there is opportunity for shifting the first-generation college

conversation away from a focus on barriers and obstacles and towards the fulfillment of

hopes.

Families of TRIO students can benefit from the findings of the research. The themes

of "focus on self in the abstract" and "focus on family in the abstract" could offer new

insights to families regarding their TRIO students' individual aspirations and the importance

of connections to family in their TRIO students' school experiences. Families of TRIO

students can benefit, however, only if they are apprised of these new insights. Workshops for

family members of TRIO students could be sponsored by TRIO programs to share insights

on the importance of family in program participants' lives. Gatherings for parents of young

TRIO students and for the children of older TRIO students could be organized to disseminate perspectives of TRIO participants and to inform family conversations about PSE and PSA.

Further Research

Findings from the current study and the data on which it was based point to areas for possible future research. One area, which could be studied in various ways, is whether or not the writers of the TFGCS realize their aspirations. This area could be explored through qualitative studies and interviews with the authors of the TFGCS. It also could be explored through tracking PSE and PSA in the National Student Clearinghouse to determine, for example, whether or not students pursued advanced degrees. A second area is the differences, if any, in the themes that emerge when the TFGCS are written voluntarily and when the TFGCS are written as a program requirement. A third area builds on the finding of differences between younger (TRIO/ETS) and older (TRIO/SSS) students and could examine such differences more deeply. A fourth area is a comparison of the TFGCS written by TRIO/ETS students who, several years later, write new TFGCS upon entering college and enrolling in TRIO/SSS.

The current study could be replicated at two-year institutions beyond CCC&TI and also at four-year institutions. At institutions where data similar to the TFGCS exist, studies could be conducted in the near term. At institutions where similar data do not currently exist, plans could be articulated for accumulating such data and for conducting studies in the future.

The study could be replicated with TRIO programs other than TRIO/ETS and TRIO/SSS. The Upward Bound and McNair programs offer more intensive services and the associated higher dollar expenditures than either TRIO/ETS or TRIO/SSS, as indicated in

Appendix A. Understanding students' perspectives over time in such intensive programs could provide important insights. The current study also could be replicated with other, non-TRIO programs, such as GEAR UP, that target first-generation college students and others from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A further area for future research would be at institutions housing multiple TRIO programs. In focusing on one institution hosting two TRIO programs, the current study revealed substantial interaction between the two programs and among the programs' participants. Might research at institutions that house three, four, five, and six TRIO programs generate important new findings? Might such research add new insight to the current study?

The finding in the current study of TRIO students' viewing their first-generation college status as an honor speaks to the need for further research. Might the existing and extensive body of literature be strengthened by new studies of students' perceptions of being the first in their families to experience postsecondary studies?

One further area identified for future research stemming from the current study pertains to a global conversation on college access and college success. An exploration of PSE and PSA programs across continents—their histories, their successes, their current vibrancy, and the aspirations of students participating in the programs—would contribute to the universal body of knowledge and to global policy deliberations in an era of tighter and closer global collaboration.

Summary

For almost 50 years and in accord with U.S. law, TRIO programs have offered PSE and PSA services to students who are first-generation college, low-income, or with

disabilities. Since 1964, TRIO programs have evolved through broadening and deepening their services such that students who are as young as 11 years old and students who are completing medical and doctoral degrees can and do enroll as TRIO participants.

For the same half-century, students have chosen to enroll and participate in TRIO programs. The current study explored what students envision for their futures at the start point of their TRIO experience and how the students' perspectives support the purposes of TRIO programs. My review of the literature revealed a scarcity of insight into students' perspectives, and it is this gap in the literature that the current study addressed.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis of students' TFGCS, written at the start point of their entry into a TRIO program. Over one half of the students identified specific goals for their futures. Just under one quarter focused on their families as a chief motivation for studying in college and for enrolling in TRIO. Over one fourth expressed enthusiasm about being first-generation college students. Students' sentiments indicate that there is opportunity for shifting the first-generation college conversation away from a focus on the barriers and obstacles of the past and towards the fulfillment of dreams in the future. The analysis of the TFGCS discovered student perspectives that incorporate aspirations, needs, and goals beyond the PSE and PSA purposes of the TRIO programs, as stated in U.S. law.

There are implications of the study for various audiences. These audiences include the TRIO staff members at CCC&TI and at the almost 3,000 TRIO programs in the U.S.; practitioners working with GEAR UP and other initiatives serving first-generation college, low-income students; institutions that host TRIO programs; the policy community; the TRIO community comprising TRIO program personnel, researchers, and advocacy groups promoting TRIO; TRIO students themselves; and family members of TRIO students.

The current study has sown a fertile field for future research. Reflecting a key finding of the current study, a new exploration could be conducted to explore more deeply the differences between aspirations of younger (TRIO/ETS) and of older (TRIO/SSS) students. The study could be replicated at other two-year institutions and at four-year institutions, with other TRIO programs, particularly Upward Bound and McNair, where per student expenditures are much higher than in other TRIO programs, and with other programs that serve disadvantaged students. At institutions where data similar to the TFGCS do not exist, plans could be articulated for accumulating these data and for conducting research down the line. The current study could be replicated at other institutions that house more than two TRIO programs and, in so doing, explore the effects of multiple TRIO programs on PSE and PSA. Delving more deeply into the finding about students' enthusiasm about being first-generation college would be important research to conduct. Taking the current study into the global conversation about college access and college success would contribute important insights to the ever tighter collaboration in educational research across continents.

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Appendix A

TRIO Umbrella

TRIO/ETS Educational Talent Search **1965,** 463*	→	Postsecondary enrollment: middle and high school $394^ 777 participants (avg.)/year
TRIO/SSS Student Support Services **1968,** 1,034	→	Postsecondary: support for completing 2-year degree and/or transfer to 4-year $1,482 197 participants (avg.)/year
TRIO/EOC Educational Opportunity Centers **1972,** 124	→	Postsecondary enrollment: Adult basic skills, GED & Adult High School $240 1,568 (avg.)/year
TRIO/McNair Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program **1986,** 200	→	For graduate through doctorate: undergraduate and graduate; seminars, summer internships, research $8,740 27 (avg.)/year
TRIO/UB Upward Bound **1964**, 953	→	Postsecondary enrollment: high school; emphasis on academics; required summers $4,876 68 (avg.)/year
TRIO/UBMS Upward Bound Math & Science **1990**, 131	→	Postsecondary enrollment: Focuses on math and science $4,989 53 participants (avg.)/year
TRIO/VUB Veterans Upward Bound, **1972**, 47	→	Postsecondary enrollment: Motivate and assist veterans $2,347 123 participants (avg.)/year
TRIO Training for Federal TRIO Programs **1976**, 10	→	Enhance skills and expertise of project directors and staff employed by TRIO $1,457 250 participants (avg.)/year

TRIO www.ed.gov

* **denotes the year that the program was established,** the number of programs in the U.S., **2010-11**
 ^ denotes average $ invested per participant per year. Adapted from *Federal TRIO programs-Homepage*, U.S. Department of Education, 2012a,
http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html and compiled by the author.

Appendix B

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-452, §2, 78 Stat. 508 (1964).

Findings and Declaration of Purpose

Sec. 2. Although the economic well-being and prosperity of the United States have progressed to a level surpassing any achieved in world history, and although these benefits are widely shared throughout the Nation, poverty continues to be the lot of a substantial number of our people. The United States can achieve its full economic and social potential as a nation only if every individual has the opportunity to contribute to the full extent of his capabilities and to participate in the workings of our society. It is, therefore, the policy of the United States to eliminate the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty in this Nation by opening to everyone the opportunity for education and training, the opportunity to work, and the opportunity to live in decency and dignity. It is the purpose of this Act to strengthen, supplement, and coordinate efforts in furtherance of that policy.

Appendix C

Higher Education Act of 1965

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Higher Education Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-329, §408, 79 Stat. 1219 (1965)	Contracts to Encourage Full Utilization of **Educational Talent** "Sec. 408. (a) To assist in achieving the purposes of this part the Commissioner is authorized (without regard to section 3709 of the Revised Statutes (41 U.S.C 5)), to enter into contracts, not to exceed $100,000 per year, with State and local educational agencies and other public or nonprofit organizations and institutions for the purpose of— (1) identifying qualified youths of exceptional financial need and encouraging them to complete secondary school and undertake postsecondary educational training, (2) publicizing existing forms of student financial aid, including aid furnished under this part, or (3) encouraging secondary-school or college dropouts of demonstrated aptitude to reenter educational programs, including post-secondary-school programs." (pp. 1235-1236)	Establishes first program to serve students with exceptional financial need. Program named Talent Search in 1968 re-authorization.

Note. Bold font highlights program name.

Appendix D

Higher Education Amendments of 1968

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Higher Education Amendments of 1968, Pub. L. No. 90-575, §105, 82 Stat. 1014 (1968)	"(b) The programs referred to in subsection (a) are— (1) programs, to be known as **'Talent Search',** designed to— (A) identify qualified youths of financial or cultural need with an exceptional potential for postsecondary educational training and encourage them to complete secondary school and undertake postsecondary educational training. (B) publicize existing forms of student financial aid, including aid furnished under this title, and (C) encourage secondary-school or college dropouts of demonstrated aptitude to reenter educational programs, including post-secondary-school programs;	Names three programs "Talent Search" term surfaces for first time
	(2) programs, to be known as **'Upward Bound',** (A) which are designed to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond high school and (B) in which enrollees from low-income backgrounds and with inadequate secondary-school preparation participate on a substantially full-time basis during all or part of the program; or	"Upward Bound" term surfaces for first time
	(3) programs, to be known as **'Special Services for Disadvantaged Students',** of remedial and other special services for students with academic potential (A) who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment at the institution which is the beneficiary of the grant or contract, and (B) who, by reason of deprived educational, cultural, or economic background, or physical handicap, are in need of such services to assist them to initiate, continue, or resume their postsecondary education.	Adds "Special Services for Disadvantaged Students" as third program
	(b) Effective July 1, 1969, section 222(a) of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 is amended by striking out paragraph (5) and by redesignating paragraphs (6), (7), and (8) (and references thereto) as paragraphs (5), (6), and (7). (c)(1) On July 1, 1969, all functions, powers, and duties of the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity with respect to **Upward Bound** programs, are transferred to the Commissioner of Education." (pp. 1018-1019)	Congress transfers Upward Bound, established and developed by the Office of Economic Opportunity, and not specifically through the EOA of 1964, to the Commissioner of Education
		"TRIO" term surfaces in community of education practitioners to identify the programs

Note. Bold font highlights program names.

Appendix E

Education Amendments of 1972

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Education Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. No. 92-318, §417b, 86 Stat. 235 (1972).	"(b) Services provided through grants and contracts under this subpart shall be specifically designed to assist in enabling youths from low-income families who have academic potential, but who may lack adequate secondary school preparation or who may be physically handicapped, to enter, continue, or resume a program of postsecondary education, including—	
	(1) programs, to be known as **'Talent Search'**, designed to—	
	(2) programs, to be known as **'Upward Bound',**	
	(3) programs, to be known as **'Special Services for Disadvantaged Students'**	
	(4) a program of paying up to 75 per centum of the cost of establishing and operating **Educational Opportunity Centers** which— (A) serve areas with major concentrations of low-income populations by providing, in coordination with other applicable programs and services— (i) information with respect to financial and academic assistance available for persons in such areas desiring to pursue a program of postsecondary education; (ii) assistance to such persons in applying for admission to institutions, at which a program of postsecondary education is offered, including preparing necessary applications for use by admission and financial aid officers; and (iii) counseling services and tutorial and other necessary assistance to such persons while attending such institutions; and (B) serve as recruiting and counseling pools to coordinate resources and staff efforts of institutions of higher education and of other institutions offering programs of postsecondary education, in admitting educationally disadvantaged persons." (p. 258)	Adds Educational Opportunity Centers as fourth program "TRIO" term for three programs out of date before it is even commonly used.

Note. Bold font highlights program names.

Appendix F

Education Amendments of 1976

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Education Amendments of 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-482, §125, 90 Stat. 2081 (1976)	"(f)(1) The Commissioner is authorized to enter into contracts with institutions of higher education and other appropriate public agencies and nonprofit private organizations to provide **training for staff and leadership personnel** who will specialize in improving the delivery of services to students assisted under this subpart." (p. 2095)	Adds fifth program to train staff, as distinct from the serving student focus of the prior four programs.

Note. Bold font highlights program name.

Appendix G

Education Amendments of 1980

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Education Amendments of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-374, §405, 94 Stat. 1367 (1980)	"(d) For the purposes of this subpart— (1) the term 'first generation college student' means a person neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree; and (2) the term 'low-income individual' means an individual from a family whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 per centum of an amount equal to the poverty level determined by using criteria of poverty established by the Bureau of the Census." (p. 1408)	Defines "first-generation college student" and "low-income student"
	"(c) In approving applications for **talent search** projects under this subpart for any fiscal year the Secretary shall—	Talent Search
	(1) require an assurance that not less than two-thirds of the youths participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application be low-income individuals who are first generation college students;	Introduces required assurance that at least two-thirds of program participants are first-generation college and low-income
	(2) require that such participants be persons who either have completed six years of elementary education or are at least twelve years of age but not more than twenty-seven years of age, unless the imposition of any such limitation with respect to any person would defeat the purposes of this section or the purposes of section 417E; and	Ages 12-27, with six years of elementary education completed
	(3) require an assurance that individuals participating in the project proposed in the application do not have access to services from another project funded under this section or under section 417E.	
	Sec. 417C. (a) The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as **upward bound** which shall be designed to generate skills and motivation necessary for success in education beyond high school.	Upward Bound
	(9) programs and activities as described in paragraphs (1) through (8) which are specially designed for students of limited English proficiency.	Introduces services for students of limited English proficiency
	(1) require an assurance that not less than two-thirds of the youths participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application be low-income individuals who are first generation college students;	Required assurances on two-thirds and one-third of participants
	(2) require an assurance that the remaining youths participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application be either low-income individuals or be first generation college students;	

(4) require that such participants be persons who have completed eight years of elementary education and are at least thirteen years of age but not more than nineteen years of age, unless the imposition of any such limitation would defeat the purposes of this section." (pp. 1408-1409)	Ages 13-19, with eight years of elementary education completed
"Sec. 417D. (a) The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as **special services for disadvantaged students** (hereinafter referred to as **'special services'**) which shall be designed to provide supportive services to persons participating in the projects.	"Special Services" surfaces as name for program serving college students
(8) programs and activities as described in paragraphs (1) through (7) which are specially designed for students of limited English proficiency.	Services for limited English proficiency students are permitted
(1) require an assurance that not less than two-thirds of the persons participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application— (A) be physically handicapped, or (B) be low-income individuals who are first generation college students; (2) require an assurance that the remaining students participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application either be low-income individuals, first generation college students, or physically handicapped;" (p. 1410)	Required assurances on two-thirds and one-third of participants, noting physical handicap as criterion for eligibility
"Sec. 417E. (a) The Secretary shall carry out a program of paying up to 75 per centum of the cost of establishing and operating programs to be known as **educational opportunity centers**	Educational Opportunity Centers
(c) In approving applications for educational opportunity centers under this subpart for any fiscal year the Secretary shall— (1) require an assurance that not less than two-thirds of the persons participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application be low-income individuals who are first generation college students;	Required assurance that at least two-thirds of program participants are first-generation college and low-income
(2) require that such participants be persons who are at least nineteen years of age, unless the imposition of such limitation with respect to any person would defeat the purposes of this section or the purposes of section 417B; and (3) require an assurance that individuals participating in the project proposed in the application do not have access to services from another project funded under this section or under section 417B." (p. 1410)	Sets minimum age of 19

Note. Bold font highlights program names.

Appendix H

Education Amendments of 1986

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Higher Education Amendments of 1986, Pub. L. No. 99-498, §401, 100 Stat. 1268 (1986)	"(d) Definitions.—For the purpose of this subpart— (1) the term 'first generation college student' means— (A) an individual both of whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree; or (B) in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree" (pp. 1336-1337)	Expands definition of "first-generation college student"
	"SEC. 417D. (a) Program Authority. The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as student support services (hereinafter referred to as 'student support services'). (d) **Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program Authority**— (1) The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the "Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program". (2) A post-baccalaureate achievement project assisted under this subsection may provide services such as—" (p. 1339)	"Student Support Services" replaces "Special Services" as program name Adds sixth program, which supports students for preparation for graduate study through the doctorate
	"(A) opportunities for research or other scholarly activities at the institution or at graduate centers designed to provide students with effective preparation for doctoral study; (2) In approving applications for post-baccalaureate achievement projects assisted under this subsection for any fiscal year, the Secretary shall require— (A) an assurance that not less than two-thirds of the individuals participating in the project proposed to be carried out under any application be low-income individuals who are first generation college students; (B) an assurance that the remaining persons participating in the project proposed to be carried out be from a group that is underrepresented in graduate education; (C) an assurance that participants be enrolled in a degree program at an eligible institution in accordance with the provisions of section 487; and (D) an assurance that participants in summer research internships have completed their sophomore year in postsecondary education." (p. 1340)	Required assurances on two-thirds, with the remaining one-third from a group that is underrepresented in graduate education Research internships only after sophomore year

Note. Bold font highlights program name.

Appendix I

Higher Education Amendments of 1992

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Higher Education Amendments of 1992, Pub. L. No. 102-325, §402, 106 Stat. 448 (1992)	"Subpart 2—Federal Early Outreach and Student Services Programs" (p. 482)	Name change from "Disadvantaged Students"
	**CHAPTER 1—FEDERAL TRIO PROGRAMS	First instance of the "TRIO" name appearing in legislation
	"(2) require that such participants be persons who either have completed 5 years of elementary education or are at least 11 years of age but not more than 27 years of age" (p. 486)	Eligible age for Talent Search drops from 12 to 11, and with elementary education completed from 6 to 5
	"(a) PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as student support services which shall be designed— (1) to increase college retention and graduation rates for eligible students; (2) to increase the transfer rates of eligible students from 2-year to 4-year institutions; and (3) to foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of low-income and first generation college students and individuals with disabilities." (p. 488)	Three purposes of Student Support Services are defined Prior "physical handicap" terminology replaced by "individuals with disabilities"
	"PROGRAM AUTHORITY. The Secretary shall carry out a program to be known as the **'Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program'** that shall be designed to provide disadvantaged college students with effective preparation for doctoral study." (p. 489)	Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program renamed as Ronald E. McNair
	"(a) IN GENERAL.—For the purpose of improving the operation of the programs and projects assisted under this chapter, the Secretary is authorized to make grants to and enter into contracts with institutions of higher education and other public and private institutions and organizations to **evaluate the effectiveness of the various programs** assisted under this subpart in meeting the purposes described in this chapter." (pp. 491-492)	Adds seventh program to evaluate programs and projects

Note. Bold font highlights program names.

Appendix J

Higher Education Amendments of 1998

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Higher Education Amendments of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-244, §402, 112 Stat. 1581 (1998)	"Title IV, Section 402, Federal **TRIO** Programs" (p. 1652)	Section 403 introduces a new program--GEAR UP--serving first-generation college, low-income schools, and communities
	"Title IV, Section 403. **GEAR UP** Program. Chapter 2 of subpart 2 of part A of title IV is amended to read as follows:" (p. 1652)	TRIO and GEAR UP are separate programs

Note. Bold font highlights program names.

Appendix K

Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008

Citation	Purpose	Evolution
Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-315, §403, 122 Stat. 3078 (2008).	**Talent Search**, required services ''(6) connections to education or counseling services designed to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students or the students' parents, including financial planning for postsecondary education." (p. 3199)	Emphasis on financial literacy and economic literacy as required services for Talent Search and Upward Bound.
	same for **Upward Bound**, required services (p. 3200)	Financial literacy and economic literacy as permissible services for McNair.
	fourth purpose for **Student Support Services** ''(4) to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students, including— (A) basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills; and (B) basic economic decisionmaking skills." (p. 3201)	Financial literacy and economic literacy as the fourth purpose of the Student Support Services program
	"(3) to improve the financial literacy and economic literacy of students, including— (A) basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills; and (B) basic economic decisionmaking skills." (p. 3201)	Financial literacy and economic literacy as the third purpose of the Educational Opportunity Centers program

Note. Bold font highlights program names.

Appendix L

TRIO Students in Caldwell County, 2010 – 2011

Variable	TRIO/ETS	TRIO/SSS	Total
Participants	625	202	827
First-generation and low-income	427	162	589
First-generation only	173	32	205
Low-income only	9	3	12
Other (for TRIO/ETS—no criterion)	16		16
With disability (for TRIO/SSS)		5	5
Male	223	36	259
Female	402	166	568
Age (years)	11-19	$\geq 15^a$	

Note. TRIO = the first three programs, Talent Search, Student Support Services, and Upward

Bound, established by the U.S. government between 1965 -1968; ETS = Educational Talent

Search; SSS = Student Support Services. Adapted from TRIO/ETS Annual Performance

Report, 2010 – 2011; TRIO/SSS Annual Performance Report, 2010 – 2011; submitted by

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute (2011).

[a]One home-schooled student completed her secondary school credentials at age 15 and

enrolled in curriculum classes at Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute in fall

2010.

Appendix M

TRIO First-Generation College Statement
TRIO/SSS and TRIO/ETS @ CCC&TI
www.cccti.edu/trio

**The federally-funded TRIO programs open educational opportunities to students, most
of whom are current or potential first-generation college^ students. We invite you to
write your *TRIO First-Generation Statement* for inclusion in the TRIO collection.***
**Please deliver your story to the TRIO Center at CCC&TI, or send it by email to Alice
Lentz, TRIO Director, at alentz@cccti.edu (Submitting your story implies permission
to reproduce and/or publish.)**

Name_____Date_____

**^ As defined by the U.S. government, a student is first-generation college if neither of his parents earned
a baccalaureate degree.**
***As of December 2011, the *TRIO First-Generation Statement Campaign* collection comprises almost 1000
statements from TRIO students, faculty, staff, and from friends in the community, near and far.**

Appendix N

**Caldwell Community College
and Technical Institute**

Office of the President

September 27, 2012

Institutional Review Board
Appalachian State University
Boone, NC 28608

Dear Appalachian State IRB:

A doctoral student in Appalachian State University's Ed. D. Program in Educational
Leadership, Alice Lentz, proposes as her dissertation a study entitled THE START
POINT: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS OF
TRIO STUDENTS AT THE POINT OF ENTRY INTO A POSTSECONDARY
ENROLLMENT OR POSTSECONDARY ATTAINMENT PROGRAM.

Mrs. Lentz's proposed research will entail the analysis of existing TRIO documents at
Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute and will be conducted such that
subjects cannot be identified, directly or indirectly through identifiers linked to the
subjects.

I am fully supportive of Mrs. Lentz's proposed research and extend her best wishers for
all success in completing the study.

Sincerely,

Kenneth A. Boham, Ed.D.
President

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Vita

Alice Sylvester Boggs Lentz was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina and is the youngest of the four children of the late Marcus Livingstone Boggs and Sarah Alice McFarland Boggs. She attended public schools in Spartanburg and graduated from Spartanburg High School in 1970. Dr. Lentz enrolled at Vanderbilt University, where she earned the interdisciplinary Bachelor of Arts, *cum laude*, in French, Spanish, and Fine Arts, in 1974. Dr. Lentz enrolled at the University of South Carolina, where she completed her Master of Arts in International Studies in 1976.

Dr. Lentz began her career in New York City in 1977 with the Fund for Multinational Management Education, conducting field research in Latin America, Africa, and Asia and managing policy seminars on various topics related to global economic development. From 1982 - 1989, Dr. Lentz served as Program Director and later, as Marketing Director, for the Council of the Americas, a New York City-based business association of companies with investments in Latin America.

From 1990 - 1994, Dr. Lentz served as Executive Director of the Americas Fund for Independent Universities. She is an award-winning author of children's books, published in 1995 and 1998. Dr. Lentz earned her MBA at Wake Forest University in 2002.

Dr. Lentz joined Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute in 2003 to direct its TRIO programs. She is married to Tom Lentz. The Lentz family lives in Hickory, NC and has two grown children.