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## Post-Secondary Education Influence: College VS. Skilled Trades

Sidney Joseph

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NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION INFLUENCE: COLLEGE VS. SKILLED TRADES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM  
IN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY

SIDNEY A. JOSEPH

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Chicago, Illinois

May, 2022

# Community Psychology Doctoral Program

## Dissertation Notification of Completion

Doctoral Candidate: Sidney Joseph

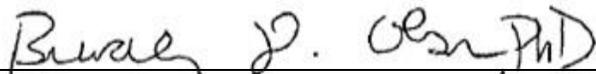
Title of Dissertation: Post-Secondary Education Influence: College vs. Skilled Trades

Certification: In accordance with the departmental and University policies, the above named candidate has satisfactorily completed a Dissertation as required for attaining the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Community Psychology Doctoral Program (College of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences) at National Louis University.



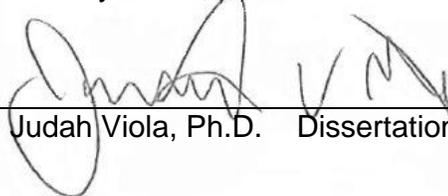
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Date

## Dedication

The dedication of my motivation, hard work, and passion is from my beloved mother, Siliana Joseph. She was the person who always pushed me to be the best person I could be and who believed in me when sometime I never believed in myself. If it wasn't for her, I don't even know if I would continue school. I know she is in heaven, happy and smiling at me. I continue the mission you put in my heart to keep God first and trust in his words. Like she would always say, "God is with me." Thank you, and I love you.

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
List of Tables (as needed) .....	
Post-Secondary Education Influence: College vs. Skilled	
Trades.....	2
Culture.....	6
African American Culture.....	6
Latino Culture.....	7
Asian Culture.....	9
Teacher Influence.....	10
American Dream.....	13
Parents' view on skilled trades.....	13
Parent attitudes toward college.....	14
Theoretical Framework.....	17
Hypothesis .....	17
Method.....	17
Sample.....	18
Design phenomenological research design	
.....	19
Instruments.....	19
Results.....	19
Discussion.....	33
Limitations of the study.....	35
Recommendations for future research.....	35

References.....37  
Appendices..... 43

Appendix A: Instrument Questions

## List of Tables

TABLE	Page
1. Gender.....	19
2. Race.....	20
3. How many children do you have?.....	20
4. What are their ages?.....	20
5. Focuses on their job to include the central theme from both groups. ....	21
6. What helped influence your career pathway as a high school student? .....	21
7. Why did you pick this specific job?.....	22
8. How would you describe your job?.....	23
9. How do you feel about your job?.....	24
10. What are/were your hopes and dreams for your child's/children future?.....	25
11. What do/did you hope your child/children will/would do educationally after graduating from high school?.....	25
12. My career choice.....	26
13. What is your viewpoint on jobs requiring a college education compared to jobs in the skilled trades?.....	27
14. Do you (or did you) prefer a career path for your child(ren) involving college or skilled trades?.....	28
15. Were you ever exposed to skilled trades in middle or high school?.....	28
16. Have you ever told (or will you tell) your child or children about the skilled trades?.....	29
17. What were their thoughts about skilled trades?.....	30
18. Do you believe the narrative of skilled trades has changed since you were in high school or remains the same in today's society?.....	31

19. What advice would you give a parent interested in telling their child about post-secondary education concerning college or skilled trades?.....32

## Abstract

### **Post-Secondary Education Influence: College vs. Skilled Trades.**

Vocational education is a learning process where individuals focus on manual training with a non-academic curriculum related to a specific trade or occupation where individuals seek careers without college. According to Merriam-Webster (2019), vocational education is a type of education or training directed at a particular field and its skills. A skilled trade is any occupation that requires a specific skill set, knowledge, or ability. It is usually a hands-on job, but skilled trades are found in every career cluster. Vocational education helps create future professionals who need education and training, leading to job opportunities for plumbers, mechanics, and factory workers. For many years, people have focused on universities as the primary source of continuing education. History gives insight into why trade schools came into being. Trade schools educated people to work in manual labor jobs. Vocational skills can empower students, and it is essential to analyze how trades can be a beneficial option allowing students to use skills directly relevant to their employment and quality of life.

The dissertation will summarize the literature review of how vocational education began to impact people in society. The dissertation will discuss the hypothesis, which includes parents who attend college will tell their kids about college. Parents who participate in vocational school will tell their kids about skilled trades. Next will be a discussion of the method used to collect data for the study—the research design for the study and the method used for the analysis. The instrument used to conduct the research and the results that lead toward the discussion are presented, including the conclusion for the future outcome if other scholars want to continue to study the advance.

This literature review discusses the history of vocational education and its first appearance in society. The literature describes how vocational curricula are used within schools and how it is essential to learn the skills used in vocational careers. Throughout the literature, the articles describe how

vocational education can empower high-risk students and lead them to a career pathway of their choice. The literature teaches how job satisfaction is essential to people participating in both skilled trades and college careers. People can learn how valuable vocational education is throughout their technical education career and demonstrate that technical education can help students.

Research on vocational education has extended traditional opportunities for people to be successful by developing employable skills. Many vocational jobs help build our society. Vocational training exists to help people find a career of their choice. According to Hillison (1995), the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 came into existence and promoted vocational education in agriculture, trades and industry, and homemaking, and provided federal funds for this purpose. Vocational education was initially viewed as a way for people to explore their creativity. Knoll (1997) gives historical evidence on how vocational training was beneficial for students who turned their skills into careers. For instance, when teachers gave advanced students challenging assignments, such as designing a church or palace, students achieved independence and enhanced their professional skills. During the 1900s, thousands of males and females in American high schools went through the curriculum that included carpentry, ironwork, and cooking skills. The skilled trades had helped influence the school system by developing a learning approach from academic and vocational training.

### **W.E.B DuBois and Booker T. Washington Vocational Education Perspective**

Two African American leaders, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, debated the difference between academic and vocational education in the recent past. Washington explained that studying at Hampton Institute was the only educational facility that offered vocational studies for Black America's success. Watson (2004) explains vocational education was an opportunity for individuals who struggled with their academic performance to experience a new learning method focused on education through work experience. W. E. B. DuBois advocated that liberal education or classical education is the best means to help Black Americans fully emancipate themselves. DuBois understood that without general education, a person would not succeed. Watson (2004) demonstrated the support of each philosophy in their opinion about education. The article explains, "Washington felt that industrial

education was superior to academics to achieve his Black social improvement goal." Vocational education can provide a new learning experience because it can help people build the communities where they reside and teach trade skills to provide for their families. Both Washington and DuBois had different views and opinions on education, but both men valued the importance of vocational education.

### **Why Are Vocational Skills Necessary?**

Vocational education is training that equips students with practical experience and technical skills in a specific type of field. The skilled trades give people a chance for more employment opportunities than focusing on a college path. Vocational education helps provide practical training with few unrelated academic course requirements. The skilled trades are relevant for many learners, including individuals who plan to enter the industry for the first time. Vocational training allows students to obtain a certificate credential and start their businesses in the future. Wheelahan (2015) explained the importance of vocational classes and how students benefit from them.

Wheelahan stated, "Vocational classes are necessary to refocus on knowledge in vocational curriculum, and they explore how vocational curriculums may differ from the more academically focused curriculum in schools and colleges, while at the same time providing students with access to the knowledge they need to be fully participating citizens in society and their occupational field of practice" (p.751). Vocational education can help graduate high school students obtain a successful career.

### **Vocational Education with Youth**

The reward of teaching children at an early stage is that they can comprehend the materials and absorb the knowledge. Sigleman (2018) explores vocational programs that can be advantageous for the youth between the ages of 15 to 18 in job skills training and allow the child to have the autonomy that will benefit their career. According to Stone (2002), vocational education may help kids in high school improve their social skills, teach them to be responsible, and give them a role model position that can build their self-esteem. Stone (2002) described high-risk students might help benefit from secondary education by examining how career technical education can improve students' risk of failure and school dropout. Students will learn a new educational method through vocational skills. The goal of a school is

to enable young people to accomplish their chosen roles as adults. Stone summarizes how career technical education can provide high-risk students with general work skills. Stone provided three ways to benefit from the learning: through work, teaching about work, and education for employment. Stone also details that training through work experience will allow the students to learn school subjects with practice as their learning context (Stone, 2002). General vocational education can make a difference for high-risk students if the school system can help design a program that allows students to choose a career that best fits them.

### **Career Pathways**

A career pathway is an organized approach to career planning for anyone wanting to land a first job or improve skills for different or better job opportunities. Vocational education can become a foundation to help a person find their purpose in any career choice they decide to choose. Draeger (2006) helps explain how students benefit from high-tech and high wages by using career pathways in Dayton, Ohio.

The author states, "On completing the prescribed sequence of activities, students design an individualized career plan and an individual education plan leading to one or two career pathways that suit them best. Guidance counselors at the high schools follow up with individual students for high school course and program selection" (Draeger 2006, p.82).

The career pathway can help create interest and provide educational training that will qualify to help a person reach a career goal. Starting a career pathway means plotting a course for identifying occupational interests. A personal path may point to a specific high school curriculum, a college or vocational school education, or specialized job training.

### **Trade School versus College**

One of the benefits of a trade school is that it is not too expensive for the students. Students may not need to take out loans, but they can receive scholarships and grants to help pay their college tuition while attending vocational education. After obtaining a degree, it is sometimes difficult to find a job in their field without experience. The amount of money college graduates

must pay back in student loans is a financial burden. The Accredited Schools' Organization (2020) explained how students view the importance of a skilled trade program and how it affects their careers. The website stated: "It is cheaper to attend vocational schools, but graduates are also quicker to enter the workforce and can be set up for certain very lucrative careers. Once students finish school in a vocational setting, they will have gained plenty of experience in their field, and they will be able to produce a good portion of funds to survive in society." The vocational job training students experience in their area will help them become experts.

"Every home is a university, and the parents are the teachers" Mahatma Gandhi (2018). Youth careers are sometimes affected in the home setting. When youth ask who most influences them, they usually respond to their parents, teachers, or close friends. When it comes to their future, the teachers in the schools also play a role in helping students with their career paths. An important question that needs to be addressed is, can youth make a career choice only without help from others? An additional literature review will help identify how teenagers choose a career after high school. Both parents and teachers want to have their best interest in youth. Still, sometimes a child would decide what is more important for their career in what they choose to do in their future. The literature will provide evidence-based research from several researchers that focus on career decisions influenced by parents or teachers that connect to the youth. Additional information that will be addressed is the cultural difference.

## **Culture**

### **African American Culture**

Kazi & Akhlaq (2017) discussed when it comes to youth career choice, and gender has a significant influence. The result shown from the article is the role of school counselors is minimal when it comes to making informed career choices. It also reveals that the youth is impressionable, gets swayed by peers, and is impressed by the media when choosing a career. Youth decisions could come from the images on social media and not enough influence from school counselors. One of the best ways to help a teen pick a career is to explore many opportunities while in high school. The inspiration from different ethnicities also impacted a child's life when choosing a career.

The stereotype of African American parents is when a child goes to college and graduates, they will get a job. Chapman et al., (2018) explored how African American parents talked to their kids about college from an early age, focusing on them that college is the key to success. The article stated, "Parents connected their child's success to issues of race and racism because they realized the multiple barriers associated with being African American and not securing a bachelor's degree" (Chapman, p.37, 2018). In African American culture, college is essential for the family because of racism. Racism could also affect a youth's decision on what career they want to explore when they finish high school.

A recent poll of U.S. parents conducted by Carnegie Corp supports the statement a survey that was conducted suggests a higher percentage of Black parents (67%) said they wanted their kids to get a college degree compared with Hispanic (56%) and non-Hispanic whites (51%) parents.

Rollins & Valdez (2006) discussed how research also shows that black adolescents have a lower level of academic achievement, a higher school dropout rate, and higher unemployment rates when compared to their white counterparts. The study's finding explores how African American high school students who perceive a higher degree of racism also have higher levels of career self-efficacy. The more African Americans experience racism could lead them from negative self-efficacy to positive self-efficacy. The authors stated, "research shows that African American adolescents do not participate in well-planned occupational paths that lead to desirable careers. African American adolescents may not choose careers in a usual manner" (Rollins et al., 2006, p.178). African American youth may not get the same result in selecting a career as white youth, but that never stops their chance of choosing a career that benefits them.

### **Latino Culture**

In the Latino, community education is essential because Latino people may sometimes not get the same opportunity as Caucasians. Sanchez et al., (2015) defined how Latino students are viewed in higher education compared to Caucasian students. The authors explore how the growing Latino population in the United States is not realizing such benefits because Latinos are not graduating from high school, pursuing post-secondary education, or completing post-secondary degrees at comparable rates to White students.

The authors stated, "The most salient non-academic finding in this study was that Latino students reported having negative perceptions of college affordability; only 13% of all students believed they could afford to attend a 4-year institution" (Sanchez 2015). The family would like their child to receive a high education in the Latino community because of their kids' chance of success.

Turcios-Cotto & Milan (2012) explained how racial/ethnic differences in the future expectations of adolescents, with a particular focus on how expectations about higher education may differ in frequency and meaning for Latino youth. The researcher stated, "This study extends existing research on future expectations in the youth of color by focusing specifically on Latinos and providing a complete picture of aspects of future academic expectations that may interfere with or promote educational attainment" (Turcios-Cotto et al., 2015, p.1407). The studies have shown that Latino youth were less likely to picture themselves attending college when compared to Black and White child and more likely to hold social goals, such as starting their own family. Latinos who would less likely go to college would have plans to create a family instead of Latino culture.

Goldsmith & Kurpius (2018) discussed how Mexican immigrants' involvement in their child's education is linked to positive student academic outcomes. The study found that a parent's effort to help their children succeed is not dependent on high levels of parent education or income. Instead, the home-based strategies, many of which are rooted in the Latino culture, and specific outreach by educators influenced parent involvement. The researchers described from previous research how ninety percent of young Latinos (16–25 years old) believe that a college education is essential, but in 2014, only 15% of Latinos 25–29 years old had a bachelor's degree or higher. The stories of the Latino parents who had motivated their children to succeed in school originated from their experiences growing up in Mexico and their beliefs that there are opportunities in the United States for people who succeed academically. The researcher said, "The themes that emerged from their stories can inform culturally salient approaches that can encourage other similar parents and inform educators to develop stronger school-parent partnerships" (Goldsmith et al., 2018, p.7).

### **Asian Culture**

Asian parents seem to have a strong influence in helping their children pick a career. In the Asian culture, parent values their children's career decision, so they want to make sure that they get the best education possible.

In the Asian culture, Asian parent also experiences the same belief in encouraging their kids to attend college when they complete high school. Okubo et al., (2007) informed that cultural values might also contribute to Asian youth arriving at career decisions because there are culturally more desired or respected occupations. According to the authors, "Most participants considered their family traditionally Chinese and described their parents' academic and career-related pressure and expectations. The parents had high expectations for their children, but they also wanted them to pursue highly regarded careers in Chinese cultures, such as a doctor, teacher, or engineer" (Okubo et al., 2007, p.446). The Asian culture appears that the traditional lifestyles taught from generation to generation play a massive role than a child making their own decision. Not only does Asian culture influence their child's career decision, but in the Caribbean, the family could sometimes voice their opinion on what direction they would like for their children to take.

College values have a higher standard than skilled trades in the Caribbean culture because more opportunities could happen with a college degree. Pinder (2014) found that non-American students had the advantage of the reported number of family background factors influencing their achievement. Youth born in the United States are usually affected to complete all their accomplishments because of their parents' motivation. Pinder stated, " The current study found that Afro Caribbean parents spend significantly more time assisting their children with homework than African American parents. Parents assisting their children with homework assignments can help to improve students' science achievement. " (Pinder 2014, p.734). Overall, the student's achievements were improved through parent involvement because they want to ensure their children receive the best education and careers.

## Teacher Influence

The teachers are also an inspiration to students in helping them choose a career. In the school system, teachers help students pick a job because the teachers can recognize the students' passion. Hansen (2018) discussed how essential teachers help play a role in students' achievement. The research shows teachers do matter, and for some students, teachers can tip the scale away from academic failure and move students toward educational success. The teachers help fill in the gap by being role models for students to succeed. Hansen stated, "Furthermore, teachers become the foundation of positive relationships when they value the input, perceptions, and experiences the students bring to school each day" (Hansen 2018, p.34). When teachers obtain a positive relationship with the students, it gives them a good advantage in what careers they can do.

Moran (2016) expresses teachers' jobs help pupils explore various pathways to realize valued purposes, and schools provide mentors, models, and opportunities to step onto a particular path. The teachers assist their students on their career pathways in leading the students to their goals. Moran stated, "Teacher competence for future planning, goal setting, consideration of consequences and emphasis on the importance of schooling can affect how much pupils believe they have a life purpose" (Moran 2016, p.3). When teachers help provide goals for the youth while in school, it helps them fulfill their dreams in life.

Sanders et al, (2017) described how school counselors correspond with career planning. The article stated, "As children and adolescents learn about themselves and the world of work, they are more likely to make informed career decisions, value school, succeed academically, and engage in school offerings" (Sanders 2017, p.24). The article explained that middle school is an important time in this continuum for students to consider their future academic and career plans and identify pathways to achieve their goals. The more we educate children on the workforce, the more we encourage students to go to skilled trades jobs. A career technical school could help academically challenged students feel that school is not in their expectations, but the trade program will allow students to succeed.

Inchara (2019) advocates that it is essential for students to learn about different careers while in school. Proper guidance, counseling, advice, vocational training, encouragement, and orientation are needed. With the appropriate support and guidance, students could find a career that can make them happy. Inchara said, "Choosing a profession should be decided as early as possible. It is better to decide what career or occupation one will adopt at the school stage. The school-going students are young, inexperienced, and raw to make the right decision. They are immature and need guidance, help, and counsel from parents, teachers, and consideration while choosing a career for them (Inchara 2019, p.871)". For the students to choose a career, they should receive help during the early stage of their lives because it can explore many career opportunities.

### **Vocational Education in Countries**

In other countries, vocational education is viewed as helping people perform their jobs better as they acquire great learning experiences. Lee et al., (2021) demonstrated in South Korea that the parents' socio-economic status affects their children's occupational outcomes and educational attainments. The author said, "The most pervasive type of career development activity is taking career, and vocational classes, shown as 94.5% of 11th-grade students in South Korea have experienced career and vocational courses in their schools. In addition, 87% of students replied that they participated in at least one type of job shadowing program" (Lee et al., 2021, p.15). The result from the article shows that in South Korea, most the students can participate in the experience of doing vocational classes and the working experience.

Xu & Sun (2021) explored how many vocational schools affect jobs and increase yearly. The number of poverty subsidies has also increased, and many job opportunities for people to find a job. The author reported, "Good vocational education can not only provide opportunities for children in poor families to acquire skills, but also provide vocational education for the labor force of most families that have not yet escaped poverty, improved their production skills, and enabled poor families to earn income and reduce Poverty" (Xu et al., 2021, p.14). Vocational education offers a job for people, but it can help a family dealing with poverty create business for a person to take care of their family.

Hoeckel (2010) demonstrated how vocational education views in Australia's youth unemployment rates are low, and the transition from education to first employment is smooth by international standards. Youth are receiving a high training and learning experience in a vocational school in Australia.

Kuczera et al., (2008) described that vocational education in Norway is essential to the stakeholders because it is considered their primary support system. In Norway, the vocational school helps students decide which program they want to choose when they finish school.

Hoeckel & Santiago (2009) In Mexico, vocational education played an important social role by providing learning opportunities to students at risk of dropping out. Various initiatives, such as mobile training units, reach out to students in remote regions with limited learning opportunities.

In Germany, vocational educators are very respected and helpful to the country's residents. Hockenos (2018) Millions of apprentices take skilled trades every year, and it is about 1.3 million apprentices once a year in Germany. Zabel & Kopf (2018) explained how unemployed parents' further vocational training influenced their children's future apprenticeship and employment opportunities. The German apprenticeship system, known as the dual education system, combines firm-based training and classes taken at vocational schools. The authors stated,

"The results show that parents' further vocational training positively influences children's apprenticeship opportunities. The larger part of this effect directly affects parents' further vocational training. This finding of a predominant direct effect may indicate that further vocational training increases the importance parents attribute to education and conveys this greater valuation of education to their children" (Zabel et al., 2018, p.594).

The more parents expose their kids to vocational education, the more likely they will try vocational school. Deissinger (2015) argued that in 2012, more than 70% of young people without school completion in Germany had to undertake some kind of training or vocational preparation in the transition system. In contrast, school leavers were graduating from an intermediate secondary school.

In different countries, vocational education contributed significantly to socio-economic development by improving the structure in the areas they worked and helping residents support their families with better career jobs and opportunities.

### **American Dream**

In the United States, people's message when coming to America becomes part of the health and wealth part of America. The term *American Dream* is often traced back to James Truslow Adams, a historian, and author in 1931. James described the *American Dream* as a land where life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of fortuitous circumstances of birth or position. However, in recent times, the concept of the American dream is not as strong as it used to be. Kanter & Venkatesan (2020) implemented a program that focuses on students with their college debt. The College Promise program is a public assurance to prepare students for the twenty-first-century workforce and pursue the American dream without the burden of unmanageable college debt. The program aims to raise awareness that going to college and graduating to get a job once completed is not always the scenario.

According to the organization of New America (2020), viewed quantitative survey of 2019 shows only around half (52 percent) agree that people with some technical education or college but no degree will earn more than those with only a high school diploma. In the survey explored in 2019, 50% of Americans feel comfortable recommending their child or close family member pursue a technical degree or certificate. The value of education is still essential in the American dream, but the goal could consist of higher education or skilled trades.

### **Parents' view on skilled trades**

The United States' attitudes toward skilled trades could be different from college because of the stereotype of how college would seem to be superior to trade school. Conner (2019) explores parents support their children in the skilled trades program if they receive more information about the vocational school. According to the author, "For decades, students and parents have believed a 4-year degree is necessary to succeed in life, but we believe differently," said Mary Kelly, president and CEO of

StrataTech Education Group. "When it comes to secondary education, there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach for all graduates. We're optimistic this research shows perceptions are shifting and there are opportunities to strengthen pathways to skilled trade opportunities" (Conner, 2019). If parents were unaware of the value skilled trades can become for the youth, it would have been difficult to encourage their children to attend vocational school. In Phoenix, parents and students reported high-promoted 4-year universities out of 73% and 2-year college programs out of 45%. Only 32% of the parent and students expresses how the school encourages trade school as a potential career.

Ayub (2017) demonstrated a study where parents expressed their attitudes on vocational education. According to the author: "They find out that parents' educational level, occupational and income have a significant impact on students' choice towards technical and vocational educational" (Ayub 2017, p.537). The result indicates that parental influence is statistically significant and impacts students' decisions toward technical education & vocational training. Ayub discussed that parents should encourage their children for technical education and vocational training, and they should reject the perception that this field is for students with low academic backgrounds. For parents who study vocational education, the area would substantially impact their kids to invest in vocational education.

Marie (2010) studied the parent's attitude toward vocational education by surveying 200 parents in udu, a local government area of Delta State take place in Nigeria. The findings reported that parents have good respect for vocational education. However, most parents still prefer white-collar jobs regarding their children's actual career choices and aspirations.

Taylor et al. (2004) demonstrated how parents influence their children's careers and expectations for their kids when they finish school. The results show that most parents may view career development as out of their control. Parents seem to realize that while they may have more influence than anyone else, it is relatively minimal.

### **Parent attitudes toward college**

American Student Assistance Organization (2018) explained parents' point of view toward college is primarily to gain skills for future employment and are less concerned about giving their kids a

once-in-a-lifetime experience. Parents still hold on to four-year college as the ultimate higher educational goal. Parents view college as a learning experience for their children and for the child to determine what they want to do with their future. According to the ASA, "When asked why their children should go to college, the top three responses all focused on employability and learning job skills for future employment" (ASA, 2018).

Turley (2006) provided several statistics on parents wanting their kids to attend college. In the 1980s, 84% of parents of students at a community college wanted their children to obtain a 4-year degree or higher. In the 1990s, a survey of parents of twelfth graders showed that 79% of parents without a 4-year degree and 93% of parents with a 4-year degree wanted their teenagers to get at least a 4-year degree. Even students with shallow grades wish their children to go to college.

The Sallie Mae Organization (2018) conducted a national survey to view American parents' opinions about college. Many families believe college is worthwhile, and that belief guides their decision-making and choices. Ninety percent of families agree college is an investment in the student, with the anticipated payoff being both aspirational and practical. The findings suggested that 85% expected students to attend college regardless of their studied field. A large majority of respondents (77%) felt college education was part of the American Dream. Fifty-two percent felt the student would have attended college for the intellectual and social experience regardless of whether they earned more money with a college degree.

When youth have a great relationship with their parents, it will enhance their chances of making a good career choice. When a parent's influence motivates their child to choose a career, it would have more impact than the teachers' influence. Tziner et al., (2012) examined how research has shown that young adults speak most frequently about career issues with their parents and name parents as a significant influence during educational and career transitions. The authors stated, "Indeed, among young people reporting a good relationship with their parents, a positive correlation was found between job characteristics deemed important by the son/daughter and the characteristics they perceived to be descriptive of their parents' jobs" (Tziner, 2012, p.103).

Barshay (2021) discussed how half of the parents in the USA do not want their children to attend a four-year college. A survey reported by the Carnegie Corporation in New York found that 46% percent of parents said they would prefer not to send their children to a four-year college after high school, but 54% percent still prefer a four-year college for their children. Parents want their children to receive an education, but what type of education are the parents encouraging their children to obtain - skilled trades, college, or making decisions for themselves? The author stated, "Parents with a bachelor's degree were more likely to want their children to follow them. But surprisingly, one-third of parents who went to college themselves did not wish their children to do the same. Geography mattered too. Suburban families were most likely to support a college education while rural and urban families were less supportive" (Barshay 2021).

Friedline et al., (2017) explain how parents who expect their children to obtain a college degree may be more willing or prepare earlier to help their children pay for college. The researchers explained that they believed a college education could help their children obtain better jobs and earn higher wages—improving the chances for upward economic mobility. The authors explore how a few lower-income parents with some college education were so specific that college was a path to a better life that they expressed almost a sense of desperation in their child's pursuit of higher education.

The literature examines how parents have many different opinions on what message they are trying to teach their children about education. Every child should receive the best education possible and obtain the proper tools when they get older to become successful. Daniel Webster; said, "Parents like options when it comes to their children's education. And they respond to quality" (Webster 2013). The question remains: what options would they prefer -skilled trades or college? A theoretical framework that facilitates how people view the skilled trades and jobs requiring a college education can help identify how parents influence their children's career decisions.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A social psychologist, Bandura, explored social learning theory. He described this as when social behavior is learned by observing and imitating the behavior of others (1977). In addition, (Ahn et al.,

2020) described social learning theory as helpful in identifying critical aspects of role models that make them effective or ineffective. The second way is by examining the outcome that has the most favorable association with the role models. When people obtain more detail on skilled trades jobs and view how workers receive satisfying results, it can positively affect their attitudes toward the skilled trades. Aranda (2016) argued that there are disparities between educational improvement efforts and the likelihood of those situations being improved. However, the focus of the literature is to discuss that not everyone may need to go to college to be successful. Skilled trade careers can be just as meaningful as those that require a college education, and people can be happy with the jobs they decide to pick. Social learning theory can be helpful when trying to understand how parents are educating their kids about career choices and providing an example for them to follow. Social learning theory can also help inform a hypothesis that children might like to follow their parents' model in a career.

### **Hypothesis**

Parents with a college degree will likely tell their children to go to college. Parents that attend vocational school will more likely say to their kids to participate in skilled trades school.

### **Method**

To be clear, the author supports and believes that skilled trades education is just important as academic education. When I was in high school and even in college, I always struggled in school because of my writing, and I felt that I didn't have an interest in school during those times. Still, I kept pursuing my education because my parents always expressed going to college, and there was nothing else to discuss. I believe that if I were introduced to vocational education, I would take an interest in skilled trades because of the less amount of years in school. Still, in skilled trades, a person can receive an excellent education and wealth career if an individual does not choose a college.

### **Sample**

The researcher interviewed parents who have kids aged 12 up - six people whose jobs required a college education, and six who work (or worked) in the skilled trades to tell their personal stories. The researcher recruited participants using social media platforms to seek people to share the stories of their

careers. The researcher used a social media platform to reach the participants because social media is an easier way to connect with people from different levels of education. The best way to obtain information concerning the participants' career choices is to conduct one-on-one interviews. The sample was convenience and ensured that every participant had at least three years or more experience in their profession. The participants involved in the study were individuals with the researcher who had connections through his social network of friends who work in professional careers and some of the skilled trade workers who were willing to volunteer to participate in the study.

### **Design**

A phenomenological research design provides an understanding of the themes and patterns portrayed by the study's participants. Groenewald (2004) explains that the operative word in phenomenological research is "described." The researcher aims to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, to refrain from any pre-given framework, but to remain true to the facts. According to Groenewald, "The phenomenologist is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved (Groenewald, 2004, p. 5)". To gather information for the dissertation, the researcher will conduct a qualitative study using interview questions to ask the participants about their careers and their influence on their children's career decision-making. Authors such as Croix et al., (2018) explained that conducting interviews is a common way to gather data for qualitative research and can be defined as a systematic way of talking and listening to people. The following instrument section describes the questions that were used in the study.

### **Instrument**

For the study, the researcher used a combination of existing measures by Friedline et al., (2017). The instrument was a semi-structured interview and added additional new questions to ask the participants about their education choices and attitudes toward their decision. In addition, the interview questions were used to explore parents' messages toward their kids in choosing a career between a job that requires a college education or skilled trades. The researcher used questions that focused on the

participants' demographics, including ethnicity, gender, and level of education. Interview questions were asked about participants' attitudes, perspectives, and experiences regarding their professional careers and how they feel they have influenced their children's education and career choices. See Appendix A for the list of interview questions.

### Results

The qualitative data collected for this study were analyzed using content analysis. The researcher read through all the contents of the responses and then analyzed what was described in the interviews to create descriptive coding. The researcher separated all the responses by questions and then read all of the answers to each question to look for specific keywords or themes related to the participant. Once the researcher was able to find three or more keywords, the researcher began to count the total theme. The researcher coded and categorized the data, looking for themes across respondents and questions. The keywords the researcher presumes to identify may include words like 'education,' 'my belief,' 'my child,' or 'choices.' Comments like those have a repeat pattern throughout the interview. The researcher was able to find themes throughout the interview by listening to each participant and identifying the keywords that connected or were similar from both groups. Once the researcher had reviewed all the themes, the researcher had to calculate all the totals respondent and separate each participant into a group. The next section of this paper discusses the analysis of the quantitative data collected during the study.

Table 1 focuses on the participant's gender. The study sample includes 12 participants, including four African-American women and eight males.

**Table 1**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	8	66.7
Female	4	33.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.0</b>

N=12

Table 2 focuses on the participants' ethnicity, and the result includes eleven African-Americans and one Caucasian that had participated in the study. Most of the participants that participated in the survey were African-American people.

**Table 2**

Race	Frequency	Percent
White or Caucasian	1	8.3
Black or African American	11	92.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.0</b>

N=12

Table 3 focuses on how many children both groups have together. The average number of children was 2.5.

**Table 3**

How many children do you have?

	The average number of children
College Group & Skill Trade Group	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

N=12

Table 4 focuses on the average of children from both group total was 19.22.

**Table 4**

What are their ages?

	The Average Age
College Group & Skilled Trade Group	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

Table 5 focuses on their job to include the central theme from both groups.

**Table 5**

	<b>Professional</b>	<b>Essential Trade Worker</b>	<b>Manager</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	5 (100%)	0	1 (33%)	6 ( 50%)
Skill Trade Group	0	4 (100%)	2 ( 67%)	6 (50%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>12 100%</b>

**N=12**

According to Table 5, five out of six parents in the college group considered their job as professional workers, including a teacher, two social workers, a clinical supervisor, and public health practitioner. In the skilled trade group, four out of six parents considered their jobs as essential trades workers that involved a plumber, two electricians, and a carpenter. For example, one of the participants in the college group said, *“I am a clinical supervisor. At the Department of Veteran Affairs”*. One participant stated in the skilled trade group, *“I’m a licensed plumber. I’m going to say Illinois in a city Chicago plumbing contractor. So I’m a plumber”*. These jobs are considered important for both groups when describing their job positions.

When the researcher began to asked the participants open-ended questions, as shown in Table 6, the focus was on the career influence while in high school.

**Table 6**

What helped influence your career pathway as a high school student?

	<b>High School Teacher</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	2 (40%)	2 (50%)	1 (33%)	5 (42%)
Skill Trade Group	3 (60%)	2 (50%)	2 (67%)	7 (58%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>12 100%</b>

**N=12**

The result demonstrates that two out of five parents were influenced by high school teachers in the college group. The skilled trade group had three out of seven influenced by high school teachers. Both groups had the family influence that helped their decision while in high school, including their mother,

stepfather, uncle, etc. This result is exciting because some individuals did not view their teachers or family as an influence in high school. One participant stated in the college group, *"I didn't have a career path in High School. I didn't know what I wanted to do. So I just went to college, hoping that I'll find something to do, and I still didn't find it. I was still searching. But I went to college"*. In the skilled trade group, another participant stated, *"to be honest, I didn't have a career path in high school because I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. I didn't find my way and choose a career path until I got older. So in high school, I was just focused on getting out of high school, and you know, getting a job or whatever"*. For these reasons, it shows how regardless if the parent were in college or skilled trades, not everyone would have the same influence while in high school because some people find their career once they get out of high school.

Table 7 focuses on how the participants felt about their job and why they went into their career field choice.

**Table 7**

Why did you pick this specific job?

	To help people	Social Influence	Stable Career	Total Responses
College Group	4 (80%)	0	1 (50%)	5 (50%)
Skill Trade Group	1 (20%)	3 (100%)	1 (50%)	5 (50%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>2 100%</b>	<b>10 100%</b>

N=12

The result demonstrated that four out of six parents in the college groups chose their job to help people, but only one person picked their job to have a stable career. In the skilled trade group, one out of six parents choose their job because of the social influence of family members or peers involved. The result that supports the Table is interview quotes from both groups. One interviewee said, *"I am a social worker in the college group. Now. I work at an agency called a trilogy. I am a transition coordinator. Why did I pick the job I'm in now, for the career I met now? I have always had a*

*passion for helping people. I didn't know the route to find that career choice". Within the skilled trade group, one of the participants stated, "I didn't know anything about a trade. I thought it was just strictly college. But when I researched what a skilled trade was and what I saw my cousin was doing, what it consists of, and what it could do for my life, that's learning to gain the knowledge. I wanted to pursue it. These are how social influence played a huge role in the skilled trade group, but those jobs were chosen to help people in the college group.*

Table 8 shows the responses of participants regarding how they described their jobs.

**Table 8**

How would you describe your job?

	<b>Professional Position</b>	<b>Skilled Trade &amp; Professional Position</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	6 (60%)	0	6 (38%)
Skill Trade Group	4 (40%)	6	10 (63%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>10 100%</b>	<b>6 100%</b>	<b>16 100%</b>

N=12

In the college group, 100% considered their job a professional position. In the skilled trade group, four out of 10 people referred to their job as a professional position, but 100% of the skilled trade group also viewed it as a skilled trade. They view their jobs as professional positions because the more experience in skilled trades, it can change to a manager position. One of the participants in the college stated, *"I would definitely consider it a professional position because to become a professional, but to become an educator in Chicago Public Schools, it requires a professional educate educators license."* The skilled trade had a unique response because some individuals feel that their job can be both. As one participant illustrated, *"If I can, I think is a little of both. Um, it's not a skill trade job in the traditional sense. Because it, you know, didn't go to union didn't go to a non-union apprenticeship, or I don't do a great deal with my hands with them. However, because I'm the program director, the program is based on*

*construction and carpentry skills*". In the skilled trades group, they feel with their jobs, the more advance the person becomes within their career, the better they can advance into a better position.

Table 9 focuses on how the interviewees can express their personal opinion about their jobs and how it makes them feel when they have to go to work.

**Table 9**

How do you feel about your job?

	<b>Passion</b>	<b>Rewarding</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	4 (50%)	1 33%	5 (45%)
Skill Trade Group	4 (50%)	2 67%	6 (55%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>11 100%</b>

N=12

The result displayed that four out of five parents are passionate about their job in both groups. The college and skilled trade group are passionate about the job because they love their work. Both groups compare their job as rewarding because they realize that when a person is working hard, the reward comes from when they feel the accomplishment of the great deed they did in their profession. Only 33% of the college group believe that the job is rewarding. In the skilled trade group, 2 out of 6 feel the career is rewarding. One of the participants in the college group said, *"I love it. Um, I think that you know it's very fulfilling for me. Before working with the University of Illinois, Chicago, I worked in substance use disorder settings and mental health disorder settings"*. One of the interviewees said, *"It's very rewarding in the skilled trade group. It's inspiring to get up every day. They know that I'm I don't have repetition work. Do you know what I mean? I'm not affected, but I just don't go in package boxes. I call myself a problem solver. Hmm, you got a problem? My job is to solve it"*. In both jobs, a person can feel that their career can be rewarding when they see all of their hard work pay off and when they love to come to work because they think they are making a difference.

Table 10 discusses in both groups what are the parents' hopes and dreams for their children's future.

**Table 10**

What are/were your hopes and dreams for your child's/children future?

	<b>Good Citizen</b>	<b>Children Successful</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	1 (33%)	2 (33%)	3 (33%)
Skill Trade Group	2 (67%)	4 (67%)	6 (67%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>6 100%</b>	<b>9 100%</b>

N=12

One out of three would like their child or children to be good citizens in the college group. In the skilled trades group, 33% also want their children to be good citizens. The college group, 33%, also discussed that they would like their children to be successful. four out of six people would want children to become successful in the skilled trade group. Good citizenship toward the parent means that they want their kids to make great moral decisions and have good values. One participant in the college group said, *"That they will grow up to be children, be adults, productive adults who make good decisions"*. In the skilled trade group, one of the parents stated, *"Um, well, my hopes and dreams is that they become successful and whatever they want to do throughout life. But I do my thing. What I'm focused on right now is generating generational wealth. Something that I can pass down to my kids and, you know so that they won't have to work as hard as I had to become where I am today"*. Both groups want their kids to be productive members of society and have tremendously successful careers.

As shown in Table 11, parents explain what they would like their children to do after high school.

**Table 11**

What do/did you hope your child/children will/would do educationally after graduating from high school?

	<b>College</b>	<b>Trade</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	4 (67%)	3 (60%)	7 (64%)
Skill Trade Group	2 (33%)	2 (40%)	4 (36%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 100%</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>11 100%</b>

N=12

The outcome in the college group was that four out of seven people want their children to pursue college, but three out of seven people would like their children to obtain a college degree in the skilled trade. The second theme was a trade school, and in the college group, two out of four people would like their children to receive a certificate in vocational training. Only two out of four parents would like children to attend a trade school in the skilled trade group after high school. The result suggests that parents in the

skilled trade want their kids to do both. One of the participants illustrated, "Yes, to go to college and like away from Chicago". In the skilled trade group, one of the participants said, "Go to college, go to college. I'm a massive proponent of college, just to be correct frank with you. Some colleges offer those particular programs even if you're going into the skills trade. So if we go into the skills, trade, this college has to provide construction, construction management, where you have to learn about the skills. So yeah, I wanted her to go to college and then possibly graduate school". Both groups had different opinions about their kid's education and what they think it is the best education for them.

Table 12 focuses on the type of conversation the kids talked to their parents about when choosing a career for themselves when they get older.

**Table 12**

My career choice

	<b>Medical Field</b>	<b>Artist</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	3 (60%)	1 (33%)	3 (75%)	7 (58%)
Skill Trade Group	2 (40%)	2 (67%)	1 (25%)	5 (42%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>12 100%</b>

N=12

The theme that both groups included were the medical field and artists. As a result, three out of seven parents in the college group said their children mentioned to them that they want to do something in the medical field. Three out of five people children mentioned working in the medical field in the skilled trade group. Of the parents with children in the college group, one out seven reported their children to want to be artists, and in the skilled trade group, two out five of their children mentioned they want to be artists. For example, one participant in the college group said, "She's also expressed interest in marine biology and veterinary medicine. One individual within the skilled trade group said, "The 15-year-old, she loves to draw, she's a pretty, pretty good artist". In general, both kids in each group seem to have different career viewpoints, and it appears that most of them may not want to follow their parent's path. In the college group, the parents mention that their children want to

become chefs, do computer science, or have a career. Table 13 focuses on the parents' viewpoint on jobs compared to college and skilled trade.

**Table 13**

What is your viewpoint on jobs requiring a college education compared to jobs in the skilled trades?

	<b>Both view equal</b>	<b>Individual choice</b>	<b>College more professional</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	2 (50%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	5 (50%)
Skill Trade Group	2 (50%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	5 (50%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>10 100%</b>

N=12

The theme includes equal views, individual choice, and college being more professional. In the college group, two out of five parents view both jobs as similar, 66.67% view the job as a personal choice, and 33% in the college group view the job as more college professional. In the skilled trade group, two out of five parents' views both jobs as equal, 33% view the job as an individual choice, and 66.7 % consider the job more college professional. Some parents in both groups view college or vocational as an educational component. In contrast, others view college to be more professional better than skilled trade. In addition, one of the parents in the college group said, *"I think they're equal. Yes, I think they're equal based on the particular job. Like for some jobs, you need a college degree to, you know, to even apply, like when you have social work, you need a degree to be a social worker. But equally, if it's someone who is a plumber, you also need a license. So I look at a license and a degree as the same thing"*. In the skilled trade group, one parent reported, *"I often say that school was more than just going to classrooms, right? School to me, was about meeting people and learning how to negotiate and leverage things. So that was cool. They were offered to me"*. Some parents would suggest that college would have more opportunities for their children than skilled trade.

Table 14 focuses on the preferred career path of their children. The two themes listed were college and individual choice.

**Table 14**

Do you (or did you) prefer a career path for your child(ren) involving college or skilled trades?

<b>Theme</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>Individual choice</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	4 (57%)	1 (25%)	5 (45%)
Skill Trade Group	3 (43%)	3 (75%)	6 (55%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 100%</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>11 100%</b>

N=12

In the college group, four out five parents prefer that their children would attend college once they finish high school. Only 25% of the parent in the college group want their kid to make their own decision. In the skilled trade group, three out of six parents would like their child or children to go to college, and the other half would like their children to make a personal decision that they feel is better for themselves. In particular, one of the parents in the college group said Quotes *“I would prefer that they make their own decision. Just make a sound decision on what they want to do”*. For example, in the skilled trade group, a parent stated, *“Yeah, I would prefer him to go to college first. yeah, if he had to pick between the two, I would prefer him to go, oh, for him to go to college first”*. In some cases, parents understand the value of both educations rather than college or skilled trade; they recognize a child can become successful in both if they work very hard.

Table 15 focuses on whether the parents were ever exposed to skilled trade in middle school or high school.

**Table 15**

Were you ever exposed to skilled trades in middle or high school?

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6 (50%)
Skill Trade Group	3 (50%)	3 (50%)	6 (50%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 100%</b>	<b>6 100%</b>	<b>12 100%</b>

N=12

The result shows both group themes were family and school. Both groups had three out of six people skilled trades exposed to their family members and high school teachers to introduce them to vocational education. In the college group, the result also includes three out of six where they were exposed to skilled trade rather than family or school. For instance, one of the parents said, *"I have an uncle's electrician. We used to go out with him and help him out. I have an uncle who is a carpenter"*. In the skilled trade group, one of the parents said, *"Freshman year, I went to Minnesota for six months. And I did have a shop class, and I built a shelf like a bathroom vanity shelf or something like that. I think that's where it all started for me"*. For this reason, it helps provide a clear understanding of why parents would be interested in sending their children to college or vocational school because the parents were exposed to skilled trades while in high school in the past.

Table 16 focuses on whether the parents ever told their children about skilled trades growing up. As shown in the Table,

**Table 16**

Have you ever told (or will you tell) your child or children about the skilled trades?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	6 (55%)	0	6 (50%)
Skill Trade Group	5 (45%)	1 (100%)	6 (50%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 100%</b>	<b>1 100%</b>	<b>12 100%</b>

N=12

Both themes were yes and no. In the college group, 100% did explain skilled trades to their children. Five out of six parents also agree that they informed their children about skilled trades in the professional trade group. Only one person from the skilled trades group did not encourage vocational training for their child. The evidence that supports this statement is a direct quote from the interviewees. One of the parents said, *"A little bit of conversation skilled trades is a second or third choice in the college group: plan B"*

or plan C. And though we've had conversations about, you know, her going to culinary school and exploring what that could look like at community colleges". The parent in the college group would be okay if their child attends vocational school, but not as their first choice. The parents of the skilled trade group said, "No, did not talk about skilled trade, only about college". For the parents in the skilled trade, even though the individual consists of their job as a skilled trade, the parent would still prefer college more for their children because college may have more to offer in their future.

Table 17 discusses what the children thought about their careers related to a skilled trade

**Table 17**

What were their thoughts about skilled trades?

	<b>Second Option</b>	<b>Others</b>	<b>Family Legacy</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	4 (100%)	2 (50%)	0	6 (55%)
Skill Trade Group	0	2 (50%)	3 (100%)	5 (45%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>4 100%</b>	<b>3 100%</b>	<b>11 100%</b>

N=12

In both groups, the theme was the second option and family legacy. In the college group, 100% of the children's parents consider skilled trades a second option if college may not work for them. In the skilled trades group, 100% believe vocational training is part of a family legacy to work with their father, uncle, or cousin in the same career field as them. The children from both groups had different opinions about skilled trades. One of the parents in the college group said, "Yes, I told my daughter, that 15-year-old, about skilled trade. And I told her I would pay for her to get you do not have classes for high school students to learn basic one on one things like being a nail tech, learning how to do nails, and how to do hair". Some parents would be interested in supporting their children in going to vocational school because the children seem interested in the skilled trade. Some of the parents in the professional trade group had a different opinion. For example, "I told her I helped build buildings and stuff like that. She did not seem interested in a skilled trade. Seems like wow, cool

was he didn't show any interest like, oh, I want to do that when I grew up". Some children may not see skilled trade as a fun career to do.

Table 18 focuses on whether the narrative of skilled trades has changed over the years or remained the same.

**Table 18**

Do you believe the narrative of skilled trades has changed since you were in high school or remains the same in today's society?

	<b>Respect</b>	<b>More Demanding</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	4 (67%)	3 (60%)	7 (64%)
Skill Trade Group	2 (33%)	2 (40%)	4 (36%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 100%</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>11 100%</b>

N=12

The result shows two themes gathered from both groups: respect and more demanding. In the college group, four out of seven believe the narrative of the skilled trades changed because more people are starting to respect skilled trade workers. Three out of seven believe the skilled trades also vary because it is more demanding for the new generation of students. In the skilled trades group, two out of four parents felt that skilled trades are starting to gain more respect from people. two out of four people in the skilled trades group felt that skilled trades change due to the more demand from people in the present time instead of the past. For example, in the college group, one of the parent-reported, *“Skilled trade look frowns upon, but now it considers as respect career.”* Parents now respect skilled trade workers' careers because other professional workers can understand how much dedication the skilled trade workers put into their careers. In the skilled trade group, one of the parents said, *“Yeah. Like as far as the unions, I feel like it's more diverse. Caucasian men do not dominate it. It's black men, black women, people, period. And then it's better tools is more advanced tools. More people have gone to the skilled trades now than ever”*. Some parents in the skilled trade would consider that vocational job is

becoming more open toward different ethnicities for people to advance in the union. More people are now founding interested in doing a skilled trade job.

Table 19 discusses advice parents would give to their peers when considering their children's future education when choosing a college or skilled trade.

**Table 19**

What advice would you give a parent interested in telling their child about post-secondary education concerning college or skilled trades?

	<b>Know your children</b>	<b>Expose skilled trade &amp; college</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>
College Group	5 (45%)	1 (20%)	6 (38%)
Skill Trade Group	6 (55%)	4 (80%)	10 (63%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 100%</b>	<b>5 100%</b>	<b>16 100%</b>

N=12

Both group themes were to understand your children's academic perspective better to determine what your children like to do more; instead, it is college or skilled trade and exposes them to both education components. In the college group, five out of six parents said they would encourage the parents to learn about their children's interests. When exposing their children to both careers, only 20% agree with that decision. In the skilled trade, 6 out of 10 decide to get to know the children depending on what jobs they want to do. Four out of ten parents in the professional trade group felt that exposing children to college and vocational education is essential. For example, in the college group, one parent demonstrated, *“Parents listen to their children and pay attention to their children's interests”*. The best to know your children is to understand and be involved in their lives. For the skilled trade group, one of the parents explained.

*“Okay, I would say expose them to both. See, what if you wanted them to go to college or if they had anything that you've seen in the past that would, you know, deter them from going to college, expose them to what you think would help them explore what it is about*

*college. But on the flip side, expose them to what a skilled tradesman is, at least let them know what they can potentially get into before they make a choice”.*

The more education children are introduced to can help them make significant career decisions for themselves, regardless of college or skilled trade.

### **Discussion**

The most significant finding of the study shows that the result did not support the hypothesis. Parents' main concern is that they want their children to have an excellent education. Parents from both groups support schooling regardless of whether it is skilled trades or college. The results above demonstrate that skilled trades are considered of great educational value to people. In the past, when people would hear or think about vocational school, people would view vocational school as a downgrade toward a career path and not the same values as academic education. Now skilled trades substantially impact society, and people begin to respect their professional work. The results show that college and skilled trade people have similarities regarding their influence in choosing a career path. Both the college and skilled trades groups understand the importance of receiving an education and having a career where a person can become successful in everything they want to do. People in the college group will be open if their children decide to go to vocational school and not attend college because they know the benefit of skilled trades school. The results were not favorable to the hypothesis as I mention earlier that parents with a college degree will likely tell their children to college and parents who attend vocational school will more likely tell their kids to participate in skilled trades school. The results above show that parents want their children to receive the best education, even though I thought both groups would like for their children to follow their parents' role as from social learning theory. The more a person observes someone, the more they would track their behavior, but this is not true in this study.

The result helps give the researcher a better understanding of why vocational education is essential to advocate in the school system. The more children are taught about vocational training; it can allow them to choose which career path in the future.

Most college graduates did agree they want their children to attend college. Still, some also mention they would like their children to receive a vocational certificate if their children did not want to attend college. In the skilled trade group, the parents would like their children to go to college first to receive an education rather than pursue a career in the skilled trades. The results expressed that both groups want their children to obtain an education regardless of their chosen field. The results also help explain why vocational schools are in need because it provides a place for those unsure of which career path to choose.

These findings align with some of those discussed in the literature review above. As Hansen (2018) discussed how essential teachers help play a role in students' achievement. Teachers can pass on values to children, prepare them for further education, and contribute to good education in society when the student is deeply affected by teachers' love and affection, character, competence, and moral commitment. Just as Moran discusses it (2016), teachers' roles are just as important as parents when it comes to students' lives in making sure the students get the same opportunities and resources when a child is searching for a career.

The results also connect with literature on how parents' attitudes toward college, as discussed in the American Student Assistance Organization (2018), explained that parents want their children to go to college even if they may not use the degree. Still, it can be an excellent resource for a child in the future to go to college to be an adult and learn how to decide on their own. The Sallie Mae Organization (2018) also advocates for parents' opinions on whether college is worthwhile for their children to attend. Parents view college as not only a place where a child can receive an education but also teach them responsibility and independence if the child lives on a college campus. Parents view college as more than just going to school and obtaining a degree education. A college is a place where a child can get a chance to explore many opportunities such as employment, networking, or long-time friendships and an experience their children may never forget.

In Awang et al., (2014), parents' opinions toward skilled trades clarify that the image of vocational education is beginning to change due to the number of vocational graduates finding

employment upon completion of training. Skilled trade workers' salaries are now comparable to college graduates, and it is seen that more people are currently pursuing skilled trade careers and maybe less college. Some might choose other professional careers such as commercial driver's licenses (CDL) or other professions with less academic work. More people are becoming aware of the benefit of sending their children to vocational school because of the high demand in the skilled trade field and less student loan debts a child would have to pay once they finish school. Conner (2019) reported that if parents receive information about the vocational school, the more they can support their children in the skilled trades program. One of the participants in the college group advocated for vocational school. The skilled trades are now becoming a college comparison. Even though a child may not want to go to college does not mean that the child cannot be successful in the skilled trade.

### **Limitations**

The limitation that occurred during the study was that the sample size was small for qualitative methods. If the researcher could get a bigger sample size, it would be more precise in determining parents' attitudes related to college and skilled trades. This suggests a larger-scale data collection like a survey. Another challenge in the study is that people I interviewed who work in the skilled trades did not just view their job as a skilled trade but as a professional positional, and for that reason, it was difficult to dissect the results. I believe it would have been beneficial if the people I interviewed labeled their job as in a particular skilled trade field. Aside from these weaknesses, this study can help support an individual debating a career requiring college or skilled trades.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, future research should recruit larger samples such as Quantitative studies like surveys and ensure that the number of participants in the skilled trades is more significant. The larger the sample size is, the more it can be generalizable toward the study to understand better how a parent views college and skilled trades. Future researchers can assess career attractiveness among students to determine if skilled trades jobs have or would equal value to a college career. Vocational education should be viewed as another option for young people if they feel college does not fit their criteria. The parent should

tell their kids from an early age to focus on what they truly would enjoy doing for the next 30 - 40 years of their life. Parents' primary goals in a child's life are for their child to be happy and not miserable. When a child has a strong connection with their parents, teachers, and communities, it can advance their career to be more likely to succeed. As an old African great proverb said: "It takes a village to raise a child" that is how a child can grow and make changes in the world.

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**Appendix A**  
**Instrument Questions**

**Background**

1. What is your name?

2. What is your ethnicity?

- Black/African American

- White/Caucasian

- Hispanic/Latino/Latinx

- Asian/ Asian American

- Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your gender?

M

F

Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your age? Age is optional.

**Career**

5. What helped influence your career pathway as a high school student?

(prompt) And why?

6. What is your job, and why did you pick this specific job?

7. How would you describe your job?

(prompt) - can you please say more about that?

(prompt) - is this a job that you would describe as a skilled trade or a professional position?

8. How long have you worked there?

9. How do you feel about your job? (prompt) - and why? (prompt) - say more.

### **Children**

10. How many children do you have, and what are their ages?
11. What are/were your hopes and dreams for your child's/children future?
12. What do/did you hope your child/children will/would do educationally after graduating from high school?
13. What do/did your child or children discuss their future career or educational hopes or dreams with you?

### **College vs. Skilled Trades**

(define skilled trades) - A skilled trade is any occupation that requires a particular skill set, knowledge, or ability that is usually hands-on, like carpenter, electrician, or plumber.

14. What is your viewpoint on jobs requiring a college education compared to jobs in the skilled trades?

(prompt) - can you please tell me more about that?

(prompt) - do you see one of these paths better than the other?

15. Do you (or did you) prefer a career path for your child(ren) involving college or skilled trades?

(prompt) - and why?

(prompt) - can you please tell me more about that?

### **Skilled Trades**

16. Were you ever exposed to skilled trades while in middle or high school?

-If yes, please tell why, and if no, please tell why?

17. What, if anything, have you ever told (or will you tell) your child or children about the skilled trades?

(prompt) - And if so, what were their thoughts about skilled trades?

18. Do you believe the narrative of skilled trades has changed since you were in high school or remains the same in today's society?

(prompt) -If yes, please tell why, and if no, please tell why?

19. What advice would you give a parent interested in telling their child about post-secondary education concerning college or skilled trades?