A Single Parent's Impact on Educationally Successful Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the influences and events that led to the educational success of students from single parent families. Specifically, what are the participant's beliefs regarding influences and events that helped make them successful students? I interviewed 12 educationally successful participants that had grown up primarily with a single parent. Participants were selected through purposeful convenience sampling. Data was collected using face-to-face interviews and a participant questionnaire. The findings of this study are significant to single parents and educators. The information gathered within this study will enable single parents and educators to understand the needs of children living with a single parent and the actions that will help them become educationally successful. Five major themes emerged through this study that positively impact a student's education. The five major themes included the expectations of the parents for their child's education, education was discussed in the home, parents generally supported their child in extracurricular activities, there was a positive adult influence outside of the home, and participants were involved in extracurricular activities at school.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research study to my parents Richard Shipley and the late Carol Shipley, my wife Shannon, and kids Ryan and Caleb. Thanks to my parents for raising four children that graduated from college. They instilled in us the understanding that education was important and our own responsibility.

I would also like to dedicate this research to the students of Centralia High School, many of whom share the same characteristics as the participants in this study. They were the initial inspiration behind this research. Working with children from a variety of backgrounds and living conditions has inspired me to find methods of helping all individuals become educationally successful.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Several studies have been conducted looking into family structure or living conditions of children. A number of these studies have concluded that family structure may be a greater determining factor in a child's academic achievement than family income or race (Sterrett, et al., 2015). Studying family structure as it pertains to children's educational achievement often involves looking into non-traditional family structure. Studies have shown that children raised in single parent homes are often at a greater risk for discipline problems, dropping out of school, and crime (Downey, 1994; George & Levin, 2015; McHale, Waller, & Pearson, 2012; Ziol-Guest, Duncan, & Kalil, 2015). The two main reasons for non-traditional two parent family structure are divorce and births out-of-wedlock (Lee, 2018; Livingston, 2014). Due to the increasing rate of divorce and the number of births out-of-wedlock over the past several decades, a large number of children are being raised in single parent homes. According to the United States Census Bureau, from 1960 to 2016 the number of children living with two parents has decreased from 88% to 69%, children living with a single parent has increased from 9% to 27%, and those not living with either biological parent increased from 3% to 4% Understanding the feelings, perceptions, and attitudes of children living in a non-traditional two parent household may better equip school personnel and others to support these individuals' educational needs.

Schools at all levels have attempted to utilize family engagement practices to enhance student learning (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004). Over the last several years, school officials have attempted more evening programs, student programs, open houses, and family reading nights in an attempt to encourage family participation in the child's school and education (Fantuzzo, et al., 2004). Often times, school officials and parents have differing perceptions on what attracts the family's attention towards the student's school. The bottom line

is that schools have recognized the importance of the family in the education of a child (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Harte & Gilbert, 2012). Characteristics typically associated with higher levels of family engagement include parental employment, marital status, parent education level, family income, race/ethnicity, and attitudes toward school programs (Keys, 2014). For the purpose of this study, I will focus on educationally successful students from single parent families, influences inside and outside the home, and the events that have positively affected a child's educational experience through the perception of the student.

Background of the Problem

The majority of current research of underachieving students focuses on two main demographics, race/ethnic background and family income. Research confirms that minority students and students of low-income families often underperform in school (Vanneman, Hamilton, Anderson, & Taslima, 2009; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). These individuals often have higher dropout rates, absenteeism, discipline problems, and lower academic achievement (George & Levin, 2015; Vanneman, et al., 2009). As a result, federal and state governments continue to grant school districts additional money to fund programs designed to promote positive academic achievement for students in these two demographic subgroups. While the research and data support the lack of academic achievement in these two subgroups, the research does not typically explain the root of the problem or why students from these two demographic subgroups tend to have lower academic achievement. Several studies have concluded that the academic challenges these subgroups face may stem from a deeper problem, a non-traditional family structure (McLanahan & Jencks, 2015). By analyzing and studying family structure's impact on academic achievement, financial resources and social programs may be redirected to assist another underachieving subgroup, children from a single parent family.

Research confirms that a child's family structure has a tremendous impact on a child's educational achievement. One of the first comprehensive studies on family structure and its impact on society was *The Moynihan Report* of 1965 (as cited in Bennett, 1995). While the *Moynihan Report* focused on "Negro Americans" of the 1960s, much of the same statistical data has been replicated to reflect the last several decades and all race/ethnic groups. The *Moynihan Report* in 1965 (as cited in Bennett, 1995) stated that 25% of all black children were born out of wedlock. By 1991, 68% of all black births were out of wedlock (Bennett, 1995). White families have not been immune. From 1965 to 1991 out of wedlock births among Whites increased from 4% to 22% (Bennett, 1995) while the number of divorced females tripled over the same period (Bennett, 1995). When looking at educational levels between two parent families compared to single parent families, the statistics continue to widen. In 1978, children living with a single parent completed, on average, just under 12 years of school and in 2008 just over 12.5 years of schooling (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Children from two parent families completed, on average, 12.5 years of school in 1978 and over 14 years of schooling in 2008 (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). When comparing college graduation rates for children of single parent families to children of two parent families, the gap widens further. By 2008, only 14% of children living with a single parent had graduated college by age 24 while approximately 39% of children from two parent families had graduated college by age 24 (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015).

Statement of the Problem

A major portion of federal and state grants towards public education go toward underachieving districts, primarily districts of low-income and high minority student enrollments. Money continues to be allocated for teacher preparation towards reaching underachieving minority and low-income students. While this may be necessary, this approach

has not addressed the bigger problem within minorities and low-income families. Statistically, students from minority and low-income families have higher rates of single parents (McLanahan & Jencks, 2015; Parker & Stepler, 2017).

The percent of children under the age of 18 living with both biological married parents has declined since the *Moynihan Report* was first released in 1965. In 1970, Black children under the age of 18 living in married families was about 64% as compared to around 34% in 2016 (US Census Bureau, 2016). White marriages with a child under 18 went from around 83% to 69% from 1980-2016 (US Census Bureau, 2016). Hispanic marriages with a child under 18 also decreased from 73% to 59% during the same time. Pew Research Center calculates that only 46% of US children under the age of 18 lived in a traditional two biological parent home in 2014 as compared to 73% in 1960 (as cited in Livingston et al., 2014).

The median income for a single mother was $35,400 and $85,300 for a married couple in 2017 (Lee, 2018). While poverty rates for single parents are increasing, the percentage of households with a single parent are also increasing. Of the total families in the US, only 6.6% of married families are living in poverty while 35.6% of single mothers live in poverty (Lee, 2018). According to the US Census Bureau in 2015, 28.2% of families living in poverty were single female head-of-household and 14.9% were single male head-of-household ("Effects of Family Structure on Poverty," n.d.).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home, the influences outside the home, and the events that led to their educational success.

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to understand the people, events, and other attributes that led to the academic success of high school students growing up in a single parent household. Three overriding questions were asked:

1) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

2) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

3) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this phenomenological study was to understand the influences, from the perspective of a student living with a single parent, that led to their own academic success. Much research has focused on the quantitative data supporting the theory that students from two parent households tend to have greater academic success than students living with a single parent (O'Malley, Voight, Renshaw, & Euklund, 2015). Most qualitative studies in this area have studied the impact of divorce (Eldar-Avidan, Haj-Yahia, & Greenbaum, 2009). I was unable to find similar qualitative phenomenological studies focusing on the academic success of students living with a single parent.

Definition of Terms

- Academic achievement – "the level of schooling you have successfully completed and the ability to attain success in your studies" (Your Dictionary, 2018, Academic achievement)

- Academic/educational success – high school graduate that continues with post-secondary education through a trade school, community college, or four-year college/university to develop the skills necessary to acquire a job in their chosen field (Foxx, 2016)
- Academic/education attainment – highest level of graduation; high school, bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc. ("Marripedia," n.d.)
- Adopted parent – legally made the parent of a non-biological child (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Adopted parent)
- Biological parent – genetically related to the child, either the sperm or egg donor (Dictionary.com, n.d., Biological parent)
- Coparent – an adult that has interest and some level of regular communication and authority over the child outside of the home; biological parent of a divorce, grandparent, mentor, pastor, family member, etc. (Sterrett et al., 2015)
- Divorce – to legally dissolve one's marriage: to end marriage with one's spouse (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Divorce)
- Education – the action or process of being educated: the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Education)
- Guardian – individual who is in care of another person (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Guardian)
- Non-Traditional two parent family – any type of family arrangement other than both biological parents married and living in the same household with the child (Adams, 2014)
- Parent involvement/engagement - Parents' involvement at home that reinforces learning through various means; monitoring homework, school involvement, communication with

school, educational expectations, etc. (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016). Participation by the parent(s) in the child's homework, school, extracurricular activities, and community through supervision and communication (Jafarov, 2015).

- Parental educational expectations – "How far in school a parent expects his or her child to go" (Lawrence, 2015, p. 184). "Long term educational attainment (ranging from dropping school to obtaining a JD/PhD/MD)" (Froiland & Davison, 2014, p. 1).
- Residential mobility – moving from geographical address or location to another (Schachter, 2004)
- School/educational mobility – transferring from one school to another school outside of the typical feeder school pattern of that school district (Langenkamp, 2011)
- Single parent – one biological parent that lives with a child or children and no partner (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Single parent)
- Social wellbeing – the student's sense of belonging and inclusion at school based on behavior, discipline, attendance, peer relationships, student-teacher relationships, and involvement in extra-curricular activities ("Social Wellbeing," 2015)
- Traditional family – both biological parents married and living in the same household as the child (Adams, 2014)
- Two parent family – Parents who are married and living in the same household, may be biological or adoptive ("Family structure," 2015)

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

It was generally assumed that participants in this study were honest and forthcoming with answers to the questions during the interview process. The participants had verbal and language

skills high enough to express their feelings and answer questions clearly enough for me to understand them.

Limitations

Limitations of the participants included a small sample size, a convenience sample, participants were selected by school administrators, and the comfortability of the participants discussing the topic (Creswell, 2007). Other limitations of the study included limited time, limited interest from the participant, and the discussions took numerous different directions during the interview process.

Delimitations

The race, gender, and religion of the participant was not a factor in the selection process nor was the race, gender, and religion of the single parent. Although the analysis was checked for similarities in responses between demographic groups, it was not the purpose of this study. This study did not include students that lived with a single parent and a second adult. Any adult (grandparent, parental boyfriend/girlfriend, stepparent, etc.), in addition to the single parent, eliminated the participant from the study.

Conclusion

The research focused on academically successful students from a single parent family in an attempt to identify the factors that have led to the student's academic success. This phenomenological study asked questions that allowed the participants to express their beliefs, feelings, opinions, and thoughts as to how living with a single parent affected their academic achievement. By understanding the student's perspectives of living with a single parent and the impact it has had on their educational success, school programs may be developed to meet the needs of students living with a single parent.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

One of the largest educationally underachieving subgroups is children living with single parents (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Children living with single parents tend to experience more obstacles affecting their education than children living with two parents (Wossmann, 2015; Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2007). Children living with a single parent may be the result of a divorce, birth out of wedlock, or the death of a parent. The additional burden put on the single parent can make it difficult for the parent to perform all of the duties and responsibilities carried out by two parents in the traditional family (East, Jackson, & O'Brien; Fan & Chen, 2001; Kim & Hill, 2015). Some research has concluded that single motherhood among African-Americans has a greater effect on African-American male children while others have concluded that single motherhood has a greater effect on White male children. There is no conclusive evidence to support that the negative effects of single motherhood are greater for African-American or White children (McLanahan & Jencks, 2015). Several studies have concluded that the academic challenges these subgroups face may stem from a deeper problem, non-traditional family structure (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). By analyzing and studying family structure's impact on educational success, financial resources and social programs may be structured to assist a larger underachieving subgroup, children living with a single parent.

This research discusses seven areas within the family that effect a child's education. Family structure, parental education, family economics, mobility, home environment, parenting styles, and parental involvement affect the education of a child. Family structure, family economics and parental education typically affect the child's education indirectly ("Effects of Family Structure on Poverty," n.d.; "Effects of Family Structure on Income," n.d.; Finlay & Neumark, 2010; Livingston, 2014; Schneider, 2005; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Mobility, home

environment, parenting styles, and parental involvement affect a child's education directly (Harte & Gilbert, 2012; Turner et al., 2007; Jeynes, 2007; Jeynes, 2011; Langenkamp, 2011; Zahedani, Rezaee, Yazdani, Bagheri, & Nabeiei, 2016). Previous research reflects that a child living with both biological parents will be more likely to obtain educational success than a child living with a single parent (McLanahan & Jencks, 2015). Research also concludes that a single parent household tends to have a lower socioeconmoic status (SES) ("Effects of Family Structure on Poverty," n.d.). Mobility, home environment, parenting styles, and parental involvement are factors that affect all children equally and directly regardless of family structure. The essential difference in a single parent household is that one individual carries out the parenting duties best suited for two parents (Froiland & Davison, 2014).

Search Description

The majority of the research was conducted through the online Holman Library of Mckendree University. EZproxy database was used to search Education Research Complete, ERIC, Psych Articles, and ProQuest Dissertation & Theses. The following is a list of phrases and terms used during the search but not limited to the following: "divorce," "single parent families," "children of single parent families," "single fathers," "academic achievement of children from single parent families," "academic achievement of children from divorced families," "education of children of divorced families," "education of children of single parent families," "educational success," "family mobility," "parental engagement," and "parental involvement." A Google search was also conducted for books and articles using many of the same key terms and phrases. The majority of books were purchased through Amazon.com.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based in three human development theories from three notable researchers. The study of children's educational success begins by understanding the psychological and social upbringing of a child. Understanding Ivan Pavlov, B. F. Skinner, and Albert Bandura's developmental theories, an educator or parent may be better equipped to raise a child for academic success and positive social wellbeing. Using Pavlov's classical conditioning, Skinner's operant conditioning, and Bandura's social learning theory, a child's education could be positively or negatively affected ("Ivan Pavlov," 1998; "B.F. Skinner," 2015; Moore, 1999). Whether teachers and parents realize it, they are constantly using classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and social learning theory to form a child's behavior and social skills (Iverson, 1992; Moore, 1999; Strangor & Walinga, 2014).

The most common and widely discussed human developmental theory is classical conditioning, sometimes referred to as Pavlovian conditioning. By studying digestion salivation in dogs, he eventually noticed that some reflexes were involuntary. The results of his experiments are known today as Pavlov's "salivating dogs" ("Ivan Pavlov," 1998). "Pavlov called this learning process (in which a dog's nervous systems come to associate the sound of the metronome with the food, for example) 'conditioning'" ("Ivan Pavlov," 1998, p. 2).

Classical conditioning is learning a new, involuntary behavior through the association of two stimuli together to elicit a new learned response ("Ivan Pavlov," 1998; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Classical conditioning is an automatic or reflexive response verses a voluntary behavior. In classical conditioning, urges or involuntary responses cannot be stopped while the actions associated with them may be stopped (Moresella, 2010). Responses in classical conditioning must be natural responses for which the individual has been trained using a neutral stimulus

(Moresella, 2010). Involuntary responses are responses such as salivating, nausea, change in heart rate, blinking, cravings, dilating pupils, smiling, and frowning (Goldman, 2012). Neutral stimuli are stimuli such as a bell, alarm, time of day, routine work schedule, a particular smell, or a song (Goldman, 2012). Responses through classical conditioning are made within the unconscious mind or without thinking. As an example, a neutral stimulus (lunch bell) is used to predict lunch time. The individual will become hungry and involuntary changes in the body, such as those that prepare the body for digestion, will take over each day when the lunch bell is sounded (Goldman, 2012).

Parents, teachers, and administrators often use classical conditioning to train children. Classical conditioning can have both a positive and negative affect in schools depending on the neutral stimuli ("Essay, UK," 2013). If a student is continuously bullied at school, the student may learn to dislike all schools or could have a heightened leveled of anxiety each time the student enters a school building (Renata, 2018). Teachers often unknowingly use classical conditioning in the classroom with a negative result ("Essay, UK," 2013). As an example, if a math teacher consciously degrades a student for poor work performance, the student may have negative feelings each time they enter a math classroom in the future regardless of the math class having a different teacher or being in a new school (Renata, 2018). Classical conditioning can also be used for positive training outcomes.

Parents often use classical conditioning with their children. Parents train their children for bedtime by constantly telling and reminding a child it is bedtime when it gets dark, after a particular television program, or enforcing bedtime at the same time each evening. Through classical conditioning, the child will eventually become tired at the same time every evening regardless of whether the neutral stimuli are in place (Goldman, 2012; Strangor & Walinga,

2014). Parents may also unintentionally create phobias within their child. If a parent scares a child by jumping out of a dark room (intentionally or unintentionally), the child could become fearful of all dark rooms creating a fear of the dark, nyctophobia (Cherry, 2018; Goldman, 2012). A phobia is fear that is not in proportion to the danger presented. Many phobias are created through classical conditioning. Potty-training is another behavior often taught by parents using classical conditioning. By teaching the child to associate a certain feeling inside his or her body to using the restroom, the child will eventually associate the stimuli of a particular stomach feeling with using the toilet (Cherry, 2018; Goldman, 2012).

The second most common form of social learning used in schools is operant conditioning introduced by B.F. Skinner. Most of Skinner's work included information regarding human and animal behaviors ("B.F. Skinner," 2015). He concluded that the influence of reinforcements was essential to an individual's learning behaviors. While many of his theories drew criticism and have been discarded, many of his theories such as positive reinforcement are widely used today in schools and at home to train children ("B.F. Skinner," 2015).

Operant conditioning is altering behavior to obtain a desired response through the use of reinforcements (Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Skinner believed reinforced behavior would be repeated. Behavior that was not reinforced would die out. Skinner named three types of responses or "operants": neutral operants, reinforcers, and punishers. A neutral operant or response is one that neither increases nor decrease behavior ("B.F. Skinner," 2015; Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Reinforcers are responses that increase the chance of the behavior being repeated. They can be either positive or negative. Positive reinforcers are those that help increase the likelihood that a behavior will be obtained, continued, or enhanced ("B.F. Skinner," 2015; Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Negative reinforcers are

those that are removed from a situation to help enhance a particular behavior. A negative reinforcer is a reinforcer that is taken away as a reward for the individual, thus the negative reinforcement improves the behavior because it eliminates an unpleasant stimulus (Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Negative reinforcement is different from punishment. A punishment is used to decrease, weaken, or eliminate a behavior by applying an unpleasant stimulus (Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). The undesirable behavior may return when the punishment is taken away. Skinner believed reinforcement was the best option for training individual behavior. Reinforcement tells one what to do whereas punishment tells one what not to do ("B.F. Skinner," 2015; Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014).

The most obvious and notable use of operant conditioning is in the school's use of punishments (Cherry, 2018; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Every school has a handbook for student discipline. Schools constantly use punishments such as after school detentions, lunch detentions, removal from an athletic team, etc. to try to curb poor student behavior. Teachers also use a variety of punishments for students. They may reduce a grade for late work, make a disruptive child write additional sentences or take away recess for a disruptive student (Cherry, 2018). Schools and teachers have recently moved towards more of a reward system and away from a complete punishment system. Teachers and schools have begun to give rewards to students for performing good deeds towards other students, student achievement on standardized testing, or a consistent pattern of good behavior (Cherry, 2018). These rewards or reinforcements have been the backbone of new programs such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Using positive reinforcement techniques has taught students to acquire and maintain appropriate positive behaviors.

Parents often use operant conditioning at home. Punishments such as taking a child's cell phone, grounding a child, taking away the use of a vehicle, or taking away a child's video game, have replaced corporal punishment (Goldman, 2012). Punishments are often used for poor grades and inappropriate behaviors. Some parents choose rewards for good grades and good behavior. Parents may choose to pay students for making a good grade on a test or a report card ("Essay, UK," 2013). Others have bought children gifts for earning or maintaining a specific GPA. Regardless of the punishment or rewards that parents use, consistency is the key (Goldman, 2012). Children must know that the parents will follow through with the punishment or reward that was predetermined for the specific behavior. If children are skeptical that the parent will not follow through, the child may go against the parent's wishes.

Albert Bandura is considered the leading cognitive psychologist and the developer of the social cognitive theory (SCT) (Moore, 1999). Bandura focuses on the acquisition of behaviors through mimicking or imitating others (Moore, 1999) and believes humans have some control, through use of cognition, over their own behaviors (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Moore, 1999). Bandura separates himself from other psychologists of his time by recognizing the ability of humans to control their own behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Moore, 1999). Bandura believes anyone can adopt the behaviors or attitudes of another person with which he or she can relate (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Moore, 1999).

Bandura's theory plays a major role during adolescence and can help in understanding how family structure can impact a child's behavior, education, and attitudes.
Bandura's study suggests children use individuals around them such as parents, siblings, TV characters, friends, and teachers as observable models (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). A child is most likely to imitate people of the same sex or most like themselves. Secondly, the child will

choose whether to imitate behavior depending on the reward or punishment for such behavior. Third, the child will use previous incidents with others to make judgments (cognitive processing) for themselves on whether or not the behavior and reward or punishment seems desirable (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Moore, 1999; Strangor & Walinga, 2014).

Children are often observing various family members throughout their lifetime. Families often use SCT to promote religious beliefs, values, and behavior. At a very early age, children observe the values of their parents. While there is a wide range of data focused on parenting and a child's behavior and attitude, it is often difficult to pinpoint specific parenting skills that most affect a child's behavior and attitude (Greenberger & Goldberg 1989). Bandura's experiment suggests that males are much more likely to imitate behaviors than females (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Moore, 1999). In association with the family structure, a male will most likely imitate the father, if one is present (Moore, 1999). The male child may imitate the mother if no father or male figure is present (Moore, 1999). Kerry Daley "clearly established that fathers can and do model their behavior after what they observe in other fathers" (as cited in Maurer & Pleck 2006, p. 103). Also relating parenting to Bandura's SCT "fathers may look to other fathers to acquire needed skills through modeling and determine what behaviors are expected of them" (Mauer & Pleck 2006, p. 103). Greenberger and Goldberg (1989, p. 30) concluded that an "adults' investment in parenting is more consequential for the socialization of their children than is their investment in work." Their study suggests that while time may be a factor in parenting, many other factors such as parenting style plays an equally important role in the socialization of a child. Research is conclusive that modeling appropriate parenting behavior is one of the most important factors that will determine a child's social skills and behavior, especially in young boys (Mauer & Pleck, 2006).

Bussey and Bandura (1999) went on to specify the importance of gender development in relationship to Bandura's SCT. Their study concluded that gender development is largely a result of modeling by parents, peers, educators, and others. Secondly, gender appropriateness is obtained through experiences through social interactions. Third, gender development occurs through direct information regarding the expectations of gender roles (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Fathers and mothers tend to discuss and treat behaviors differently depending on the sex of the child (Bussey & Bandura, 1999).

Each of the three learning theories require involvement and consistency from the individual in authority. In this study, the research will look for the factors that made a student from a single parent educationally successful. As discussed, whether it is classical conditioning, operant conditioning, or social cognitive theory, learning begins at birth with stimuli, reinforcement, and mimicry (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). As an individual grows from birth to death, one is constantly learning from individuals around them and their observations of their surrounding environment (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). Learning experiences can be both positive and negative depending on the individuals and environment surrounding a child. Children from two parent families have greater consistent positive stimuli, reinforcement, and mimicry than children living with a single parent, and, therefore, have a greater chance of educational success (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015).

Review of Research

Educationally Successful

Multiple factors contribute to an individual's academic success. There are also numerous theories and ideas of how one can obtain academic success. To complicate matters even more,

everyone has his/her own definition or perception of what academic success means. For some individuals, academic success means earning a high GPA (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015). For others, earning a four-year college degree is considered academic success (Foxx, 2016). Other individuals believe they have achieved academic success when they are educated with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the duties of their occupation or career choice (Foxx, 2016). Some even see academic success as earning a high school diploma (Warn, 2014). For the purpose of this study, academic success will focus on students that have graduated high school and are continuing with post-secondary education through a trade school, a community college, a four-year college/university, or have completed post-secondary education (Foxx, 2016). The students interviewed in this research self-reported several of the characteristics of academically successful students, regardless of living in a signal parent home.

Any Internet search looking for the characteristics of a "successful student" will find numerous articles from various authors. For the purpose of this research, I narrowed down and combined those characteristics into ten themes that are generally common among the majority of articles relating to the characteristics of a successful student. The ten characteristics include: respectful, responsible, confident, motivated, emotionally stable, good self-management, curious, hardworking, good study skills, and engaged ("Characteristics of Successful Students," n.d; Chen, 2017; Knafo, 2014).

Good learners are usually respectful of authority, their peers, and others around them (Chen et al., 2017). In showing respect to others', students learn how to communicate with authority in the appropriate tone and language. Successful students will show respect to their peers by the way they appropriately treat other's possessions and their social differences. Successful students often learn to respect authority at home (Chen et al., 2017).

Successful students take responsibility for their own learning ("Cambridge Learner," 2015). Responsible learners take it upon themselves to be successful. They do not blame others for negative consequences that may occur. Successful students will recognize the actions that created the consequences and make sure to avoid similar actions in the future. Responsible learners do not claim to be the victim of an event or the consequence of another individual's actions ("Characteristics of Successful Students," n.d.). Instead, a responsible learner takes it upon themselves to do things differently or better the next time. Responsible learners often learn from their own mistakes or by observing other's mistakes. Responsible learners see themselves as the primary person responsible for their learning ("Characteristics of Successful Students," n.d.).

Successful students are also highly motivated (Meador, 2018). Motivated students want to be at school and want to succeed. They often do what is necessary to make good grades and achieve a high standard. Students may be motivated by a variety of factors. Some students are highly motivated by the course or subject they take. Other students may be motivated by a reward for the successful completion of a task. Parents and teachers motivate students with words of encouragement and constant reminders of the purpose of academic success (Chen et al., 2017). Some students are motivated to achieve to please their parents, teachers, or another individual. Many students are also self-motivated by the achievement of certain goals and dreams ("MESA," 2016).

Successful students are able to appropriately manage their emotions ("Characteristics of Successful Students," n.d.). Children first learn how to manage their social and emotional skills from their parents/guardians (Chen et al., 2017). By learning at a young age, children learn how to properly adapt their feelings and social skills when parents or adults are not around. Much of

a child's success in school depends on the use of proper social and emotional skills (Chen et al., 2017). Students that exhibit proper social and emotional skills in a classroom have a better chance at increasing their knowledge and skills than a disruptive or inattentive student. Teachers will often work individually with academic struggling students that are well mannered and behaved over students that are disruptive and disrespectful (Meador et al., 2018). Students with solid emotional intelligence will also be able to overcome obstacles, setbacks, or temporary failures by managing their emotions and using such situations as motivation to obtain their goals ("MESA et al.," 2016).

Self-management, in some ways, is like emotional intelligence. Students with appropriate self-management are often good citizens, rule followers, able to prioritize their schedule, and make effective use of time. Students with good time management skills are able to juggle school and work, plan for study time, and plan for leisure ("Successful Student," 2016). Time management may also include planning enough time for rest. Good time managers are able to prioritize their schedules and not become sidetracked by social media, television, or other nonproductive distractions (Knafo et al., 2014). Students that are able to prioritize work, activities, and study time will have a better chance of accomplishing their goals more efficiently than students that do not prioritize their daily schedules (Knafo et al., 2014).

A high curiosity level is another quality of an academically successful student ("Successful Student," 2016). Students that are curious of a particular topic or subject are more likely to be involved in the learning process. Curious students enjoy learning new information, sometimes about topics they may have not been interested in before (Weimer, 2014). Curious learners are not afraid to ask questions (Meador et al., 2018). Students that ask questions are generally curious and more interested in learning the information being taught rather than being

embarrassed by other students in the class. Most teachers realize that when a student asks a question, other students in the classroom most likely have the same question but are afraid to ask (Meador et al., 2018). Curious students are also lifelong learners. Lifelong learners never stop in their pursuit of learning and searching for new information and knowledge their entire life. Curious learners ask questions their entire lives continuing to build on their own knowledge, especially when they believe a question has not been fully answered or answered to their satisfaction (Weimer et al., 2014).

As most teachers know, their best students are not always the most academically gifted. For many educators, their favorite and best students are often the ones that work hard and give the most effort (Meador et al., 2018). Many educators believe that many of their most successful students have been those that have given the most effort and learned to work hard for their achievements (Meador et al., 2018). Hard workers are generally self-driven towards their goals. When they come across obstacles or setbacks, they usually find it within themselves to work harder and with more effort towards the pursuit of their goals ("Successful Student et al.," 2016). Hard work also consists of determination. When a student does not understand classroom material, he/she must be determined to do what is necessary to understand the material or accomplish their goals. This may include spending extra time on homework, asking questions, requesting help from peers, or getting individual help from the instructor (Knafo et al., 2014). Whatever the case may be, extra effort and hard work will continue to help an individual through many obstacles and towards the achievement of their goals.

Some of the most successful students in school are those that are involved and engaged in school functions outside of the classroom (Knafo et al., 2014). Being involved in clubs, organizations, athletics, etc. gives students an opportunity to communicate and engage with

students from various ethnic and religious backgrounds that may share similar beliefs, opinions, and knowledge about other topics or subjects (Meador et al., 2018). Being involved in such organizations allows students the opportunity to learn how to work as part of a group or also help them improve their leadership skills (Meador, 2018).

Family Structure

According to a 2012 US Census Bureau survey, only 46% of US children ages 15-17 have lived with both biological married parents since birth ("State of the Family," n.d.). By the age of fifteen, 54% of all US children have lived in a household without both biological parents. This may include living with a single mother, stepparents, or cohabitating couples ("State of the Family," n.d.). This compares to 63% of children ages fifteen in 1950 living with both biological married parents and 37% in 1950 living in a family structure other than both biological married parents ("State of the Family," n.d.). The survey also suggests that the increase in children living with a single parent is a result of out-of-wedlock births, since the divorce rate has been fairly consistent over the same time frame ("State of the Family," n.d.). Another significant statistic within family structure shows the amount of children living without both biological married parents in terms of race/ethnic background. In 2012, based on race, 17% of Black children, 65% of Asian children, 54% of White children, and 41% of Hispanic children lived with both biological married parents ("State of the Family," n.d.).

Research confirms that a child's family structure will have a tremendous impact on a child's academic success. One of the first comprehensive studies on family structure and its impact on society was Moynihan's report of 1965. Moynihan's report focused on "Negro Americans" of the 1960's. Much of the same statistical data has been replicated to reflect the last several decades and all race/ethnic groups. Moynihan's report stated that in 1965, 25% of all

Black children were born out of wedlock (Bennett, 1995, p. 29). By 1991, 68% of all Black births were out of wedlock (Bennett, 1995, p. 30) and by 2010, the number had risen slightly to 72% (George & Levin, 2015, p. 34). White families have not been immune to this phenomenon. From 1965 to 1991, out of wedlock births among Whites increased from 4% in 1965 (Bennett, 1995, p. 30) to 22% in 1991, and increased to 36% by 2010 (George & Levin, 2015, p. 34).

Children of divorce often have negative long-term outcomes such as lower SES as adults, psychological issues, academic issues, and an increased risk of marital instability (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002). While the majority of children may be negatively impacted by divorce, not all children are negatively impacted. In some situations, divorce may be positive if the nature of the relationship is highly volatile or is in constant turmoil. Divorce may actually have a positive effect on the child by bringing a child into a more stable family environment post-divorce (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002).

In cases of divorce, mothers typically become the sole or main caregiver. Numerous studies have concluded that in the majority of divorce situations, fathers of divorce will have an adverse coparenting relationship with the mother (Abell & Schwartz, 1999). Furstenberg and Cherlin's (1991) study estimated that fewer than one in ten fathers were able to maintain a positive coparenting relationship with the mother after the divorce. Likewise, Maccoby and Mnookin discovered only 17% of divorced fathers in their study had a positive coparenting relationship with the mother (as cited in Abell & Schwartz, 1999). These studies look strictly at divorced fathers and coparenting. This data does not consider the fathers that never establish any type of relationship with their child (Abell & Schwartz, 1999).

In the context of coparenting, 67% of African-American youth will live in a single parent household compared to 23% of the overall general population (Sterrett et al., 2015). Sterrett's et

al. (2015) study defined coparents as individuals other than the parents, closely involved in the family by engaging in child-rearing and parenting activities. Non-marital coparents may be aunts, grandparents, friends of the mother, sister of the mother, or other individuals (Sterrett et al., 2015). Sterrett et al. (2015) suggests that adolescents of African-American single mothers greatly benefit from the utilization of a coparent. The coparent provides numerous additional emotional and physical supports the single mother may not be able to offer. The coparent may take on many of the roles the second biological parent should have provided. The study does not suggest that the coparent takes the place of the parent but adds additional support and resources for the child. Analyzing this study also reinforces the hypothesis that children from two parent families have a distinct advantage of being successful in life by pointing out that even children from single-mother homes have a greater chance of achievement when a coparent is in place (Sterrett et al., 2015).

Family Education

In 2014, a study looked directly at the statistical data of 490,000 California high school students in grades 9-12 (O'Malley et al., 2015). Among these California high school students, there was a direct correlation between students living with two biological parents and academic performance. Students living with two parents had a higher self-reported GPA than students living with one parent, living with foster parents, or homeless students (O'Malley et al., 2015). Students' perceptions of a positive school climate also followed a similar pattern concluding that students living with two parents tend to have better perceptions of school climate than those living with one parent, living with foster parents, or homeless students (O'Malley et al., 2015). Thomas Deliere and Ariel Kalil (2002, as cited in Duncan & Murane, 2011) found that by the time students are in eighth grade, 90% of children living with both biological parents will

graduate from high school, 69% of children living with a single mother that has never been married will graduate from high school, and 75% of children living with a divorced mother will graduate from high school. While these studies do not explain the factors behind the trend or how to close the gap, they do support the theory that students from two parent homes tend to have higher academic achievement than those living in a home without two parents.

When looking at educational levels among two parent families compared to single parent families, the statistics continue to widen. Single parent children completed, on average, just under 12 years of school in 1978 and just over 12.5 years of schooling in 2008 (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Children from two parent families completed, on average, 12.5 years of school in 1978 and over 14 years of schooling in 2008 (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015, p. 39). When comparing college graduation rates for children of single parent families to children of two parent families, the gap widens further. By 2008, only 14% of children of single parents had graduated college by age 24, while approximately 39% of children from two parent families had graduated college by age 24 (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Intact married families with children have parents with higher educational attainment levels than do all other family structure types ("Effects of Family Structure on Income," n.d.). Parents with higher educational attainment tend to set educational success as a priority for their children. Conversely, parents that have minimal education or a poor experience in school will be more likely to transfer a negative perception of education on to their children ("Effects of Family Structure on Income," n.d.).

When looking at the difference between children of widowed mothers and divorcee mothers, children of widowed mothers have a higher level of educational success than children of divorcee mothers. The educational success of children from a widowed mother was more similar to those of two biological parent families (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000). One explanation

offered is that children of divorced families may have been exposed to a greater amount of marital conflict resulting in negative effects on the child's psychological well-being (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000).

The majority of research looking into children living with a stepparent continues to compare them with children living with either biological parents or a single mother. The data regarding children living with a stepparent also shows lower educational achievement than those living with both biological parents even though specific reasons may be hard to define (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Research comparing the educational achievement of children living with a stepparent compared to those living with a single mother have achieved mixed results. When studying stepparents, many factors must be considered such as the age of the child when the single parent marries the stepparent, the educational level of the stepparent, the new family income, and whether the adults were cohabitating before the marriage (Duncan & Murnane, 2011).

Some studies have been conducted to compare the effects of single mother families compared to single father families. Downey (1994) found very little difference in the number of discipline issues at school and the students' GPA between single father and single mother families, although his study did show a significant increase in the students' standardized test scores. He suggested two main possibilities that provide a child with a greater chance of success, economic resources and interpersonal resources (Downey, 1994). While single fathers tend to provide greater economic resources to the child, a single mother tends to give greater interpersonal resources. Downey (1994) suggests that both are equally important in the success of a child and, therefore, is the reason that children living with s single father and children living with a single mother have similar predictable levels of success in school and that one factor is no

more important than the other. Differences in behaviors and attitudes of the single father and the single mother do not result in differences in the child's academic achievement (Dufur, Howell, Downey, Ainsworth, & Lapray, 2010). When either sex is required to do most of the parenting, the parenting attributes become more similar to both sexes (Dufur et al., 2010).

Family Structure and Income

The median income for all family types has grown over the last twenty years ("Effects of Family Structure on Income," n.d.), the disparity in income levels by family type has not changed. In 1995 the median family income for first time married couples was $48,000, $45,900 for step families, $18,500 for divorced or separated couples, and $15,000 for never married single parents ("Effects of Family Structure on Income," n.d.). The US Census Bureau reports a similar discrepancy in median family income between married couples, single fathers, and single mothers in 2015. While the single father and single mother both have substantially less median income than a married couple, a single male earns approximately $13,400 more a year than a single mother ("Marriage and Child Poverty," n.d.). Other sources calculate similar discrepancies in the median income between a single mother and married couple. According to the Single Mother Guide website, the median income for a single mother was $35,400 a year versus $85,300 for married couples in 2017 (Lee, 2018).

Single parent families often fall into the category of low-income households, posing another disadvantage to the children. In 2015, the US Census Bureau data revealed approximately 12 million single parent families were living in the US. Of those 12 million single parent families, 80% were single mothers (Lee, 2018). The highest percentage of families living in poverty are single female head-of-household ("Effects of Family Structure on Poverty,"

n.d.). As for children living in poverty, 40% of children living with a single mother live in poverty compared to 12% of children living in two parent families (Lee, 2018).

Home Environment

In 2001, Robert Marzano concluded that a student's background accounts for approximately 80% of the student's academic success, while the school and teacher account for approximately 7% and 13% respectively. The student's background takes into account family income, occupation, SES, and other aspects of the home environment. In other studies, home environment heavily outweighed all other variables including education, SES, occupation, and the combination of each (Marzano, 2001). Looking at a student's background, the home environment is a major component of the student's education. Home environment also has several dimensions such as the home atmosphere, parenting style, parental educational level, family structure, and family income (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Martinez & Forgatch 2002; Marzano, 2001).

A main component of the home environment is the stability or instability of the family versus the actual family structure. Regardless of the type of family structure, the amount of instability within the family may be a greater detriment to the child's education than the family structure itself (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). As instability occurs with parents, the children may be less stable emotionally and psychologically after a biological parent, cohabitating individual, or stepparent moves out of the family. The instability may be more of a factor in the lack of a child's educational success than family structure (Duncan & Murnane, 2011).

Martinez and Forgatch (2002) found that poor parenting practices could be credited for the negative effects on children of divorce. Increased family transitions resulted in the decrease in effective parenting and poorer child adjustment (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002). As family

transitions increase, parenting effectiveness continuously decreases. Their research went on to conclude that parenting practices were one of the greatest predictors for boys' adjustment and not family transitions alone (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002). Children react differently to family transitions. Some have increased behavior problems, some may withdraw from relationships, and some may have increased problems at school, while others may have little or no change at all. Boys that are in family transitions are at an increased risk for negative outcomes. Mothers with numerous partners constantly interrupt their parenting practices and continuously decrease their parenting effectiveness (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002).

Two biological parents and a stable married stepfamily have higher levels of school engagement than does a stable single mother, stable cohabitating stepfamily, and an unstable family structure. The findings also show that there is insignificant difference between school engagement of a two biological parent family and a stable married stepfamily (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). The research tends to suggest that living in a stable married family may be a better predictor of school engagement than either living with a biological family or stepfamily. Children living in unstable and transitioning households will tend to have less school engagement by their parents (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Using the same type of family structures, similar results occurred with a student's GPA and high school graduation (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Students living in unstable families, single parent families, or cohabitating stepfamilies will experience lower graduation rates and GPA's than their counterparts living with a married stepfamily or both biological parents in a stable environment (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). For GPA, high school graduation, and family engagement with the school, the stability of the home seems to have the greatest impact.

Family stability can also be linked to the cooperation or lack of cooperation between coparents of a divorce. In situations of a divorce in which both biological parents may try to take an active part in child rearing, the relationship between parents has a major impact on a child's behavior (McHale, Waller, & Pearson, 2012). In a study of children of a divorce, ages three to four years old, the effects of coparenting on a child's externalizing behaviors were found to be determined based on the relationship of the coparents (Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001). Schoppe et al. (2001) concluded that coparents who were supportive, cooperative, and positive with each other when the child was three years old had fewer negative outbursts or violent behaviors from the child at the age of four. On the other hand, coparents that tended to demonstrate negative parenting cooperation and a poor relationship with each other when the child was three years old had more negative outbursts and violent behaviors from the child at the age of four (Schoppe et al., 2001). Belsky, Woodworth, and Crnic's 1996 research also supports the idea that coparenting families with negative relationships are likely to have children with more behavior and discipline problems, particularly sons (Schoppe et al., 2001). Research supports that children as young as infants will have higher levels of negative and aggressive outbursts or behaviors in their later years when there is an adverse coparenting relationship (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; Schoppe et al., 2001). A child growing up around constant negative and adverse relationships between his or her parents, whether married or divorced, will be at a greater risk of displaying negative behavior. In other words, children that see turmoil and fighting in the home on a constant basis will tend to demonstrate similar types of behaviors when confronted with situations at school, with peers, or in the community (McHale & Rasmussen, 1998; Schoppe et al., 2001).

As previously discussed, when looking at single parent households, the mother performs the majority of single parenting. In households where only the mother is present, numerous potential hardships are created for the child (McLanahan, 1999). Research continues to look at those hardships created by a fatherless household. In most cases, data shows that an absent father leads to lower household income, higher incarceration rates of children, less structure within the household, and a greater burden on the single parent to perform all of the parenting duties and tasks of two parents (East, Jackson, & O'Brien, 2006; Harper & McLanahan, 2004; McLanahan, 1999). The requirements of performing double parental duties often becomes overwhelming for the single parent and results in less structure, parental involvement, and support for the child. Research continues to provide evidence that supports the theory that young boys growing up in fatherless households are at a higher risk of incarceration ("Effects on Crime," n.d.), dropping out of school, and poorer social well-being than boys growing up with a single father, girls growing up with a single mother, and girls growing up with a single father (Harper & McLanahan, 2004).

Fatherless households often provide an economic burden on a single mother. In cases of divorce, the single family tends to lose roughly 50% of its income after the divorce (McLanahan, 1999). The mother may be forced to go to work, work longer hours, or work multiple jobs due to the lack of financial support. When the single parent spends more time making up for lost income, all other aspects of parenting tend to diminish (McLanahan, 1999). The amount of time a parent has to nurture and supervise the child's activities at home has been taken away by working extra hours. With less disposable income, there is also less ability to provide the child with other positive social activities outside of school (McLanahan, 1999). Single parents,

particularly single mothers with low income, are often forced into high crime and poor school neighborhoods due to lack of income and resources (McLanahan, 1999).

East, Jackson, and O'Brien's (2006) examined thirteen articles regarding absent fathers and adolescent development. The literature review examined social and psychological well-being of adolescents growing up without a father. An absent father could be the result of death, divorce, incarceration, or family strife. When fathers are absent due to conflict, turmoil, incarceration, or family breakdown, the child is at an increased risk for poorer social and psychological well-being as compared to when the father's absence is due to death, military leave, or working away from home (East et al., 2006). Research shows that father absent females are at a greater risk of sexual activity and teen births (East et al., 2006). The risk of drug use from peer pressure is also increased when an adolescent is without a father (East et al., 2006). Antisocial behaviors and incarceration rates increase among fatherless children as compared to children with fathers present (East et al., 2006). When the father is absent from a child, the child is at an increased risk for health, psychological, and social turmoil resulting in less academic success, increased behavioral problems, increased emotional distress, and incarceration (East et al., 2006). Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLYS) in 2003 shows that 21.7% of children with two parents were contacted by the school for student behavior problems. This compares to 37.7% of children in stepfamilies and 39.4% of children living with single mothers ("Effects on Children's Education," n.d.). The data also demonstrates a much lower percentage (20.3%) of adolescents from an intact married family being suspended or expelled from school than all other family types, with the single parent family being the highest (50.2%) ("Effects on Children's Education," n.d.).

Using the 2003 NLYS Harper and McLanahan (2004) found several potential indicators that increase the risk of incarceration for adolescent boys being raised without fathers. An adolescent boy without a father in a low SES family had a significant increase in the likelihood of incarceration as compared to an adolescent boy being raised by both parents. As previously discussed, family instability has been linked to adolescent psychological and social issues along with lower academic success (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). Likewise, family instability also increases the risk of incarceration regardless of the boy's stage of adolescence. Children that have never had a father were at a higher risk for incarceration than children in an unstable or disruptive family environment (Harper & McLanahan, 2004). In general, adolescent arrests tend to increase when one parent is absent ("Effects on Crime," n.d.). Harper and McLanahan (2004) suggest from the data that children from two parents have a healthier physical, psychological, and social well-being than children from a single parent. Ironically, children in stepfamilies had a three times higher rate of incarceration than those from a single parent family. They suggest issues within the stepfamily may have created or have been the result of conflict, violence, or abuse (Harper & McLanahan, 2004).

One of the newer areas of research being developed is comparing family structure with the development of a child's psychological and social well-being due to victimization. Victimization of a child may include sexual assault, mistreatment, or the witnessing of family violence. Victimization of children is creating psychological disorders, health issues, and social issues within the child (Turner, Finkelhor, & Ormrod, 2007). Current research suggests that a child's family structure will have a major determining factor on the chances that a child is victimized. Children living with a single parent or stepparents experience an increased risk of victimization as compared to children living with both biological parents. Research continues to

show that victimization of a child will have future implications on the child as they get older and children living with single parent and stepfamilies are at a greater risk for victimization (Turner et al., 2007).

While both single parent and stepfamilies tend to have increased levels of child victimization, the types of victimization within each family structure tends to be different. Single parent families tend to experience greater victimization due to the lack of economic resources and time constraints of the single parent (Turner et al., 2007). As a result, Turner (2007) believes that a single parent family's low SES often places them in more violent neighborhoods and schools. Children from single parent families experience more crimes and violence and are also witnesses to such crimes and violence. Turner (2007) also indicates that the perpetrators of crimes and violence are most likely to be non-family members.

On the other hand, victimization in stepfamilies is most often the result of the perpetrator being a member of the stepfamily. Children in stepfamilies are exposed to several forms of victimization including mistreatment, sexual abuse, physical abuse, and sibling abuse (Turner et al., 2007). Research indicates that stepfathers are more likely to sexually abuse their children than biological fathers (Turner et al., 2007). There is also evidence to show an increased risk of physical abuse towards a child in a stepfamily (Turner et al., 2007). Turner (2007) concludes in his research that the victimization of children in stepfamilies often results from parental dysfunction within the stepfamily and is the result of a parent being the perpetrator. Dysfunction within stepfamilies is often created from increased levels of parental imprisonment, unemployment, drug/alcohol issues, and ongoing parental arguing.

In an unstable home environment with multiple adult transitions within the household, the likelihood that a child will have psychological, social, or behavioral issues will increase

(Schoppe et al., 2001). In the case of stepfamilies, children are at greater risk for sexual victimization and abuse than in any other type of family structure (Turner et al., 2007). Children living in unstable environments where there are constant adult transitions (people moving in-and-out of the house) will tend to have lower grades and GPA's (Martinez & Forgatch, 2002). A negative home environment created by poor coparenting or cohabitating couples directly affects a child's behavior (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Schoppe et al., 2001). In single parent homes without fathers, incarceration rates for males drastically increases (Harper & McLanahan, 2004) along with teen pregnancy for females and drug use for both male and females (Schoppe et al., 2001). Regardless of the family structure, the home environment impacts a child's psychological, social, and behavioral outcomes (Marzano, 2001).

Mobility

There are generally two types of mobility associated with schoolchildren, residential and school mobility. Residential mobility generally refers to moving from one geographical location or address to another (Schachter, 2004). Residential mobility can range from moving out of the country, state, county, or community one lives in. Residential mobility may also occur when moving to a new address within the same community. School mobility refers to moving from one school to another outside of the typical feeder school pattern (Langenkamp, 2011). Changing schools outside of the typical feeder school pattern often involves a complete change in the student's school environment, social groups, and educational structure (Garboden, Leventhal, & Newman, 2017). Residential and school mobility do not always coincide. Changing a residence may not always necessitate a school change if the move remains within the same school district (Garboden et al., 2017). Likewise, a school change may occur for reasons other than a residential change. Students may be reassigned schools due to school boundary

changes, discipline issues, poor attendance, school choice, or parent choice (Garboden et al., 2017; Langenkamp, 2011; "Reasons," 2018). While some residential and school changes may have a positive effect on the child, the reason for the change may have the biggest impact on the child's education ("Reasons," 2018).

Families often change residence for a variety of reasons. Families may change residence due to financial reasons, family breakups, or occupational change (Murphey, Bandy, & Moore, 2012). The 2002-2003 US Census Bureau data calculates residential moves are 50% housing related, 26% family related, and 16% work related (Schachter, 2004). The 2007 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) achieved similar residential mobility results. In 2007, approximately 13% of children ages one to seventeen changed residents. According to the 2007 NSCH, housing factors accounted for 49% of all moves, while family related reasons accounted for 28% and employment reasons 18% (Murphey et al., 2012).

The US Census Bureau report on geographic mobility calculates mobility rates based on specific demographics. When accounting for residential moves by marital status, 10.2% of married couples, 17.8% of divorced couples, 6.6% of widowed mothers, and 19.7% never married individuals changed residents (Schachter, 2004). Children not living with either biological or adoptive parents are five times more likely to move than are children living with either biological or adoptive parents (Murphey et al., 2012). Comparing household types, married-couple households moved 10.4% of the time as compared to 21% of all other household types (Schachter, 2004). Poverty levels show a similar trend. Families living above poverty level moved 12.8% of the time while those below the poverty level moved 24.1% of the time (Schachter, 2004). As family income increased the likelihood of moving decreased. The level of maternal education is also linked to residential mobility. Mothers with a high school diploma as

their highest level of education are twice as likely to move has those with a college degree (Murphey et al., 2012).

Gauging the effects of residential or school mobility on a child's educational achievement is often very difficult. Multiple factors play an important role in a child's education. Isolating the effects of mobility is difficult due to the enormous amount of variables that effect a child's education (Garboden et al., 2017). The distance of a move may or may not affect a student's educational success depending on the other variables within the move such as a social change, cultural change, or economic change in the student's living situation (Garboden et al., 2017). The timing of the move may also affect student outcomes. Most research indicates that a residential or school change during the teen-age year's result in a decrease in school grades and the likelihood the child will complete high school (Langenkamp, 2011). The number of times a child moves during their childhood also effects academic performance. Some research indicates that students lose three months of learning each time a student changes schools along with a decrease in extracurricular participation (Sparks, 2016).

While the cause and effect relationship between family types and mobility is difficult to understand, there is definitely a statistical relationship between the two (Murphey et al., 2012). Data and research indicate that traditional families have less residential and school mobility than do non-traditional families (Murphey et al., 2012; Schachter, 2004; Theroux, 2006). Poverty and family transitions also result in an increase in mobility (Schachter, 2004). Just like poverty, family transitions, and family type independently correlate to a reduction of a student's grades or chances of going to college. Both residential and school mobility are also likely to negatively affect a student's academic achievement, especially the more times a student moves (Murphey et al., 2012; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Theroux, 2006).

Parenting Styles

Another major factor affecting a child's academic achievement can be attributed to parenting style (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989; Zahedani, Rezaee, Yazdani, Bagheri, & Nabeiei, 2016). Diana Baumrind, through her research, cited three predominant parenting styles in the 1960's. Baumrind believed that most parents approach parenting from either an authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive parenting style (Milbrand, 2017). She believed these three styles were most closely related to the child's social skills, behavior, and academic ability. In later years, Eleanor Mccoby and John Martin added neglectful parenting style to the list (Milbrand, 2017). Through Dornbusch et al. (1985) and Steinberg's (1989) research they discovered that the authoritative parenting style is most likely to help a child become academically and socially successful.

The first parenting style, authoritarian, is the strictest of all parenting styles. The authoritarian parent typically makes all of the decisions for the child (Milbrand, 2017). The child has very little to almost no input into their own life. Authoritarian parents often enforce strict and harsh discipline immediately following the child's poor behavior or non-compliance (Milbrand, 2017). The strict enforcement is there to ensure the child follows what the parent instructs. Authoritarian parents may find it difficult to give a rational answer to the child for a decision that was made. The parent's rationale to the child for their decision is usually because they are the parent and can make the decision. The rationale usually goes unexplained to the child (Milbrand, 2017). Authoritarian parents often set extremely high expectations for their children but fail to gain any input from the child. Much of the child's life is planned for them and the child is expected to conform to those plans and meet the parents' expectations of the

plans. Children from authoritarian parents are more likely to have self-esteem issues, difficulty with decision-making, and less likely to be a leader as they grow older (Milbrand, 2017).

The second form of parenting style, is the authoritative parenting style. Authoritative parents may allow some discussion or input from the child in decisions related to the child (Milbrand, 2017). Authoritative parents often set rules and parameters for their children. In different cases or situations, the parents may allow the children more freedom and input with some restrictions (Dornbusch et al., 1985). In some situations, the parents will allow the child to make their own decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions. This method allows the child to learn from their choices. As the child gets older and is more responsible with their own decision-making, the parents will continually allow the child to make more of their own decisions (Dornbusch et al., 1985). Authoritative parenting is much more complex. The parent must be able to discuss and rationalize with a child their answers and reasons for their decisions to the child. Children growing up with authoritative parents are often more well-adjusted in society. They are usually better equipped to make good decisions and handle most situations on their own. Negativity and setbacks often have little effect on children from authoritative parents since they have learned how to overcome adversity by being allowed to make decisions, within boundaries, and accept consequences at a young age (Milbrand, 2017).

Baumrind's third parenting style is the permissive parenting style. Permissive parents allow their kids to make most of their own decisions and often give in to the child's desires (Milbrand, 2017). As a child grows to adolescence, the parenting may look more like a friendship than a parent/child relationship. Children with permissive parents often grow up with a lack of proper social adjustment and tend to take less responsibility for themselves and their actions (Dornbusch et al., 1985). Children living with permissive parents often have very few

boundaries or guidelines to follow (Milbrand, 2017). Even though parents are available and accessible to the child, the child is able to decide what they want and the parent will provide it for them or allow them to obtain it themselves. Children with permissive parents often grow up and are unable to accept consequences for their own actions and have poor social emotional skills (Milbrand, 2017). These children are also more likely to be incarcerated, alcoholics, drug addicts and abusers. They grow up with difficulty properly handling social and emotional adversity (Milbrand, 2017).

A fourth parenting style, added much later by my Maccoby and Martin, is the neglectful parenting style (Milbrand, 2017). The neglectful parenting style recognizes the parent that is often nonexistent or has very little communication with the child. The neglectful parent is often associated with the child that has no limits or boundaries (Milbrand, 2017). Neglectful parents often leave their children to fend for themselves at a very young age. There are usually no consequences at home for the child's poor decisions or behavior. Many times children with neglectful parents are left to raise themselves and possibly take care of other siblings (Milbrand, 2017). Children growing up with neglectful parents often have difficulty building and maintaining relationships (Milbrand, 2017). These children may also deal with the emotional disorders and anger issues throughout their lives. They may grow up to live without any family, friends, or human connections (Milbrand, 2017).

In 1985, Dornbusch et al. and his team studied the relationship between family structure and the control of adolescence. The study looked at single parents, particularly mother only households, in relationship to adolescent behaviors when income and parental education are controlled (Dornbusch et al., 1985). The study took into account Baumrind's three parental styles, authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Dornbusch's et al. (1985) study looked at the

family structure, taking into account parenting styles and other factors, in relationship to adolescent deviance (Dornbusch et al., 1985, p. 328). The results showed that family structure has a correlation to deviance (Dornbusch et al., 1985, p. 340) for both sexes while being stronger for males. The results do not explain why the correlation exists, but they prove there is a correlation between single parents and a decline in children's behavior, especially between single mother households and male children. Other results within the study determined that when a second adult is brought into or aids in the single mother household, the child's behavior reaches closer to that of a child living in a two parent family. The overriding conclusion to Dornbusch's et al. (1985) study is that it takes more than a single parent to raise well-adjusted children. This is especially true for mother-only households raising male children.

In 1989, Laurence Steinberg studied individual components of Baumrind's authoritative parenting style and their individual effects on academic success in children. Three individual components of authoritative parenting style were proven to have a positive effect on a student's academic success. The three components were psychological autonomy, stronger discipline, and students feeling accepted by their parents (Steinberg et al., 1989). The strongest positive effects came from students that felt their parents gave them psychological autonomy and firm discipline, while there was also some correlation between students that felt more accepted by their parents. Each component had its own individual positive effect and, therefore, contributed to the overall positive affect of the authoritative parenting style on a student's academic success (Steinberg et al., 1989). The single most direct effect of authoritative parenting, which is directly correlated to a child's success, is the parents' reinforcement of a positive work ethic upon their child (Steinberg et al., 1989). Steinberg et al. (1989) concluded that a child's motivation and work ethic are most important to their academic success. Children that "described their parents as

treating them warmly, democratically, and firmly are more likely than their peers to develop positive attitudes toward, and beliefs about, their achievement, and as a consequence, they are more likely to do better in school" (Steinberg et al., 1989, p. 1433).

Most recently, Zaheani's (2016) study used Baumrind's three parenting styles to compare the academic success and career paths of 310 college students. The study asked several questions of the students regarding their interactions with their parents, the time spent at home by their parents, the time spent by the parent with the child, and their cultural upbringing. In this study (Zahedani et al., 2016) the overriding question was whether or not parenting styles had any effect on a child's educational success. The results of the Zaheani's (2016) study, like others before, showed that the authoritarian parenting style has a negative relationship in regards to a child's educational success. The results also showed that a firm parenting style or authoritative as defined by Baumrind, has a direct positive correlation for student success (Zahedani et al., 2016). The results of the permissive parenting style show that there is no significant relationship to a child's educational success (Zahedani et al., 2016).

The Zaheani's (2016) study also concluded similar results for students' career paths. Students growing up with firm or authoritative parenting styles were more likely to have upper level management careers. These individuals are much more likely to be successful in their careers and potentially higher wage earners (Zahedani et al., 2016). Students with authoritarian parents showed a negative correlation in their career path and no correlation in the career path of students reporting growing up with permissive parenting styles (Zahedani et al., 2016). The results of their study concluded that parents and parenting styles play an important role in a child's academic achievement and career path. Like studies before (Dornbusch et al., 1985;

Steinberg et al., 1989), the authoritative or firm parenting style is most significant and most likely to raise children that are academically and career successful.

Studies relating parenting styles to academic achievement often include Baumrind's authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles (Milbrand, 2017). Very few if any studies have been conducted analyzing the effect of neglectful parenting on student academic success. It is safe to assume that a child growing up under a neglectful parenting style will be at high risk for academic failure and poor behavior (Milbrand, 2017). Studies indicate the most positive parenting style is that of the authoritative parent (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Steinberg et al., 1989; Zahedani et al., 2016). When children feel accepted by their parents, live in a cohesive family structure with two parents, are taught and expected to use proper social skills by their parents, are allowed to make age-appropriate decisions and accept the consequences of those decisions, and are consistently expected to do their best, they are more likely to reach their full potential than under any other parenting style (Steinberg et al., 1989; Zahedani et al., 2016; Milbrand, 2017).

Parental Involvement

While data shows that children from two parent families tend to have greater academic achievement and more years of schooling than children of single parent homes (Ziol-Guest et al., 2015), some studies suggest that there is an overriding issue involved. Over the last few decades, several studies have been conducted investigating parental involvement (Benner et al., 2016; Fan & Chen, 2001; Ma, Shen, Krenn, Hu, & Yuan, 2015) as the basis for academic achievement. Research finds the level and type of parental involvement has a major impact on a student's educational success, (Benner et al., 2016; Fan & Chen, 2001; Ma et al., 2015). Conversely, over engagement by parents can have a negative effect on the academic achievement

of a child if the over engagement is in the form of excessive parental control and excessive criticism (Jensen & Minke, 2017). There are multiple ways in which parents can be involved in their child's education at home or school and a variety of methods for gauging parental involvement.

While children of single parent, low-income families are often at a greater risk for dropping out of school, poor academics, and increased disciplines problems, studies have demonstrated effective ways to overcome some of these obstacles. School policies and practices have been shown as a greater predictor of parent involvement than parents' education level, income, or racial/ethnic background (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). By creating school policies and procedures that enhance parent involvement, the school can begin to work with parents in a positive way to improve the child's opportunity for educational success. Schools may also eliminate barriers created between the parent and school partnerships (Fantuzzo, et al., 2004).

Parental involvement can be defined in many different ways. Kleiman LaRocque describes parent involvement as the "caregivers' investment in the education of their children" (2011, as cited in Jafarov, 2015, p. 35). Gill Crozier defines parental involvement as "the intervention in their children's education in order to be able to obtain information about their children's academic growth and participation" (1999, as cited in Jafarov, 2015, p. 35). Regardless of how one defines parental involvement, the common thread is that the parent or parents have an interest in the child's academic success.

Parental involvement also means different things to different people. When parents were asked what parental involvement means to them, some of the most common responses were supervision of homework, relationship with teachers, involvement in extracurricular programs, and collaboration within the community (Jafarov, 2015). Most individuals view parental

involvement as actions towards the child or school from the parents (Jeynes, 2011). On the other hand, when students were asked what parental involvement means to them, students commonly responded with parental assistance with homework, stimulation from parents, and communication between parents and school (Jafarov, 2015). Teachers see positive parental involvement as communication, participating in the child's school, monitoring of their child, and appropriate discipline (Jafarov, 2015).

Studies conducted in parental involvement often look at the time parents spend with their children, parental participation in the child's activities, communication at home, supervision at home, community involvement, parental contact with the school, and educational expectations (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2007; Jeynes, 2011). While these are not the only indicators of parental involvement, they are some of the most common parental involvement indicators studied. Parental involvement indicators impact student achievement at varying levels or degrees (Fan & Chen, 2001). Recent studies have shown which types of parental involvement indicators appear to have the greatest effect, such as parental expectations, parental communication, and parental style (Jeynes, 2011).

There are also many factors that will affect the amount of parental involvement with the child's education, both at home and at school. The school's level of openness to parental involvement may encourage or hinder the parent's willingness to be involved at the school. (Jeynes, 2011). How the school staff views its environment and how they communicate with the home will have an effect on the parents' and students' attitudes towards the school and education. Jeynes (2011) believes schools need to focus on creating a more open and friendly environment towards parents while opening lines of communication. In doing so, schools should

convey a message of high expectations and a high level of commitment to the students when communicating with parents.

The parents' educational level, income level, lack of time, and parenting style will also have a major effect on the parent's level of involvement (Jafarov, 2015). Research shows that parents with low educational outcomes and low SES tend to spend less of their family income on their children's educational activities and enhancement materials at home (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Parents' personal background and experiences are often used to make decisions and form opinions in regards to their child's educational needs. The student's age, gender, past achievement, and experiences will also affect the ability of parents to be involved in their child's education (Jafarov, 2015). Parenting style may be determined by the parents' experiences as a child based on the level of their parents' involvement (Jafarov, 2015).

Researchers often divide parental involvement into various categories. Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) divide parent involvement into three basic categories. Their study compared academic socialization, school-based engagement, and home based engagement (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Epstein (2011) breaks family involvement down into five types of parental involvement: family obligations, school obligations, school involvement, home involvement, and decision-making. Family involvement practices generally tend to look at the relationships between the parent and the child and the relationship between parent and school or teacher. The quantitative data found in research for parental involvement tends to focus on specific and detailed behaviors of parental involvement practices found in each of these groups (Jafarov, 2015; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

The first type of involvement Epstein describes is the "basic obligations of families" (Epstein, 2011, p. 130). Basic family obligations are those obligations necessary for raising a

child, such as: health, hygiene, wellness, and other living conditions appropriate for child rearing. "Basic obligations of families" (Epstein, 2011, p. 130) can best be summed up using Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). Parent involvement for the physiological needs, safety needs, love or belonging needs, and esteem needs of the child at home will affect the attitude and emotions the child will carry with them into a school. Children's bodies and brains cannot develop properly without appropriate nutrition (Maslow, 1943). Federal and state programs have enhanced financial resources for school districts with high rates of low SES to help those districts provide appropriate meals at breakfast and lunch. Students living in unsafe environments may not see academics or education as a priority, but tend to be more focused on their own day-to-day safety (Kim, 2008). This may stem from violence in the home or community in which they live. Children can focus more on school and education when their immediate needs have been met.

The second type of involvement Epstein describes is the "basic obligations of schools" (Epstein, 2011, p. 131). The obligation of the school is to inform parents of school programs, protocols, and news regarding the school. Depending on the community in which the school resides, outreach programs may vary. Some districts may best reach parents through regular snail mail, others may use emails, some districts use social media, and others may reach parents through a cellular outreach call system. Even though information may be communicated with the family, how often districts communicate and the clarity of the communication can make a difference with each family (Epstein, 2011).

"Involvement at school" (Epstein, 2011, p. 131) gauges the amount of quality and quantity of the parents working within the school as volunteers and spectators at their child's events. Parental involvement as a volunteer may look differently from elementary school to

middle school to high school. As students get older, they are usually less enthused about having parents volunteering at the school (Epstein, 2011). In elementary schools, parents are often involved as helpers in the classroom, lunchroom, or recess. Parents also get involved through school booster clubs and other organizations to help raise money for a team or club. Parental involvement at the school also includes the parents attending school functions such as athletic contests, drama performances, and other activities the child participates in to show support and approval of the child's involvement (Epstein, 2011).

Parent participation at the child's school has a positive effect on the child's educational outcomes. Studies have shown varying results at different grade levels. Some studies show that increased parent attendance or participation with middle school students has a positive relationship to the student's academic achievement (Jensen & Minke, 2017). On the other hand, studies have shown little or no effect on academic achievement among high school students (Jensen & Minke, 2017). One possible explanation for the differences in middle school and high school academic achievement from parental involvement is that parents are more likely to volunteer or feel welcomed at the middle school more so than at the high school level. By the time students are in high school, students begin to gain autonomy and high schools ask for fewer volunteers (Jensen & Minke, 2017).

Epstein (2011) also describes how schools can provide guides to parents for "involvement in learning activities at home" (Epstein, 2011, p. 131). Schools must provide information and resources for parents to use in assisting their children with homework and other activities. Teachers provide information regarding the skills and abilities the child is expected to obtain before moving to the next level. Schools may also need to provide instructions to the parents outlining methods in which the parents can help their child with homework and other

skill building activities (Epstein, 2011). In other words, the schools teach parents how to spend time working with their children to enhance their child's education.

The fifth type of involvement Epstein describes is the "involvement in decision-making, governance, and advocacy" (Epstein, 2011, p. 131). Parent organizations are used in a variety of ways. Governance and advocacy involvement uses parent groups to help formulate policy, procedures, and protocols (Epstein, 2011). Some parent groups may be used as communication services. Schools have used parent groups as a mechanism for persuading other parents or an entire community on major issues such as tax referendums. Schools have used parent groups for input on school policies such as the school dress code. Epstein (2011) believes schools need to train their parents on how to make decisions and communicate those decisions with others.

Jensen and Minke's (2017) literature review defines several areas in which parental involvement/engagement have positive effects on student academic achievement. Numerous studies continue to support, with data, that when appropriate parental involvement strategies are used at home and at school, the likelihood of high school completion and college enrollment is increased along with the student's positive emotional status and social well-being (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Jensen and Minke (2017) outline five techniques schools can utilize to increase parental engagement that can positively impact a student's academic success. First, schools need to communicate and reach out to families (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Teachers and administrators can effectively disseminate information to parents related to procedures, policies, and other school matters. They may also work with parents on how to encourage students to be successful. Secondly, schools can make the transition from middle school to high school more appealing and less intimidating (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Programs can be developed to give parents

information on how to support and encourage student success. Schools may employ liaisons as a direct link between the parent and school (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Rather than teachers and administrators being the only avenue for school communication, liaisons may make it easier for parents to talk to for routine questions and difficult concerns. As students get older and move towards the upper grades or secondary level, schools and parents should begin fostering the development of student autonomy (Jensen & Minke, 2017). Perhaps the most difficult issue is how to balance autonomy with support. Parents must learn how to allow students to begin making their own decisions regarding certain challenges while also being supportive of those decisions. This can be done in the beginning through simple items such as course selection. Fifth, parents and schools should work collaboratively on interventions (Jensen & Minke, 2017). If a student is struggling, whether it is academically or behaviorally, school officials and parents should work together and form a plan to get the student working towards academic success.

Not only does appropriate parental involvement enhance academic success, it also improves mental health. Wang and Sheikh-Kahlil's (2014) research looked at various types of parental involvement and its effects on students fifteen through seventeen years old. Wang and Sheikh-Kahlil (2014) demonstrated that parental involvement influences achievement and depression both directly and indirectly. They suggest that specific types of parental involvement have a greater impact on student achievement and emotional stability than others. When a parent volunteers at school or attends a child's function at the school, the child may have a more positive emotional link to the parents and the school (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). It is also important for the parents to show support for their child while allowing the child to maintain self-sufficiency and independence at school. The amount of time parents spend at school may

not improve academic achievement if the only time a parent is in the school is to resolve student discipline or academic issues (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Wang and Sheikh-Kahlil (2014) research also compared ethnic groups and SES groups. When comparing ethnic groups, data revealed that parental involvement had a similar effect across both European American and African American parents. Each type of parental involvement had a similar effect on each ethnic group. Therefore, the same parental involvement strategies can be used with similar success across both ethnic backgrounds (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). This cannot be said of SES subgroups. Lower SES parents were typically found to have less parental involvement and academic socialization strategies than higher SES parents. The important aspect of the research showed that when low SES parents used positive parental involvement strategies, they were more positively engaged in school than were high SES parents (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Some of the most recent studies are pointing to parental expectations as the leading parental involvement indicator, especially for first-generation college students (Bui & Rush, 2016). Studies have concluded the best parental involvement indicator of a child's educational success is parental expectations (Fan & Chen, 2001; Bui & Rush, 2016; Froiland & Davison, 2014; Jeynes, 2007). Student achievement, regardless of socioeconomic status or family structure, is most closely aligned with parental expectations for educational success. When compared to a host of other family involvement practices, parental expectations continue to be the most closely aligned parental indicator of student educational success (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Studies looking directly at parental educational expectations also find a correlation between parental educational expectation and SES. SES is often directly linked to parental educational expectations (Fan & Chen, 2001). Students from higher SES backgrounds often

report higher levels of parental expectations when compared to students from lower SES backgrounds (Lawrence, 2015). Schmidt-Wilson (2013) concluded that when parental expectations were used as the variable, parental educational expectations had a definite positive correlation across all SES groups. Most often, high SES families present consistently higher educational expectations than low SES families, but when accounting for parental educational expectations alone, high parental educational expectations resulted in higher educational success regardless of the family's SES (Schmitt-Wilson, 2013).

Froiland and Davison's (2014) research looked at positive parental expectations and positive school outcomes using a number of different subgroups. Their study looked at family SES status, family structure, gender, and ethnicity, with respect to parental expectations and parental school relationships. They found that both parent expectations and parent school relationships were associated with positive school outcomes. The significance of this study was that "parent expectations had a stronger association with school outcome than socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and family structure" (Froiland & Davison, 2014, p. 11). They further indicated "the association between parent expectations and school outcomes was twice as strong as the association between parent school relationships and school outcomes. Family structure had a significant positive association with parent expectations, parent school relationships, school outcomes" (Froiland & Davison, 2014, p. 11).

Jeynes' (2007) meta-analysis of 52 studies also points to "parental expectations" as the leading component of family involvement for a child's academic success. Jeynes (2007) points out that parenting style and parent participation have a positive impact a child's success, but the parent's expectations of the child has a much greater impact on the child's success. The meta-analysis indicates that parental expectations have almost double the effect of parenting style

(Jeynes, 2007). While parents may provide support, discipline, and communication for the child, it is the parents' ability to convey positive educational expectations to the child that effects the child's academic outcomes the most. Ongoing discussions of the value of education, parental sacrifice for the child's education, and the value of a personal work ethic are much more effective than an authoritarian parental expectation of forcing a child to meet a high standard (Jeynes, 2007). Jeynes (2011) suggests that the subtle and ongoing parental expectation delivery helps the child internalize high expectations for themselves.

Current research could be pointing to the direct correlation of parent expectations and educational success for children (Bui & Rush, 2016; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014; Froiland & Davison, 2014). If parental involvement research continues to point at the impact and importance of parental expectations on a student's educational success, then future parental involvement programs may need to focus on developing positive parental expectations of all students, particularly students from single parent families (Froiland & Davison, 2014).

Conclusion

Without question, parents play a major role in the development of a child's behavior, education, and attitudes. Learning begins with stimuli, reinforcement, and mimicry at home. Bandura's SCT suggests children learn by observing individuals around them such as parents, siblings, friends, and teachers (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Children learn from their family members' key social behaviors and ideas such as religious beliefs, values, and appropriate behaviors. Bandura's experiment found that children are also likely to imitate parent's emotions, behaviors, and actions, especially male children (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Similar to Bandura, Skinner also promotes the idea that parents are key to reinforcing positive behaviors and correcting negative behaviors ("B.F. Skinner," 2015, Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014)

while Pavlov believes children are taught by conditioning their behaviors with specific stimuli (Goldman, 2012; Srangor & Walinga, 2014). Regardless of the method or technique, parents are key to developing a child's behaviors and beliefs in their early years (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; "B.F. Skinner," 2015, Goldman, 2012; Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014).

Attributes and skills children need to become educationally and socially successful are taught in their formative years. While there may be multiple definitions of educationally successful, the definition used in this research pertains to students that have graduated high school and continued on to a post-secondary institution (community college, trade school, or university) or graduated from a post-secondary institution. The skills it takes to be educationally successful, such as being responsible for one's own learning, being motivated to learn, being socially and emotionally mature, having a quality work ethic, and being respectful of others ("Cambridge Learner," 2015; "MESA," 2016; "Successful Student," 2016) are taught at home. When looking at the traits of educationally successful students, many of them are reinforced through operant conditioning, SCT, and classical conditioning (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; "B.F. Skinner," 2015, Goldman, 2012; Iverson, 1992; Strangor & Walinga, 2014).

The literature points out a direct correlation between a child's educational success and their family structure (Sterrett et al., 2015). Many factors within the family structure affect a child's education. If the literature is accurate, educationally successful children growing up in single parent households should report many of the same family and parental characteristics of those described in two parent families. The four common parental characteristics of successful students are high parental expectations (Fan & Chen, 2001), authoritative parents (Steinberg et al., 1989), parental involvement (Jeynes, 2007), and a second supporting individual (Sterrett et al., 2015). The biggest disadvantage for a child living in a single parent household is that there

is only one parent to do the job of two, making it more difficult on the single parent (Froiland & Davison, 2014).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to find the people, events, and other factors that guided a student from a single parent family to academic success, as perceived by the student. I was unable to locate qualitative research focusing on educational outcomes of students from single parent homes. Utilizing a phenomenological approach, I was able to conduct one-on-one, in-depth interviews with the participants by asking the following questions:

1) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

2) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

3) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

This chapter describes the specific methods used to research the lived experiences of academically successful students raised in a single parent home. The methods described in this chapter are based primarily on Leedy and Ormrod's (2013) and Creswell's (2007) suggestions for conducting a phenomenological study. The method of selecting the participants, location of the interviews, the collection of data, and analysis of the data are explained in detail. This chapter also includes the eligibility criteria of the participant, the specific sub questions that were asked during the interview, and ends with the ethics and bias of the research and researcher.

Research Design

Numerous quantitative studies have been completed verifying that students from single parent families tend to have fewer years of schooling and lower academic achievement levels than students living with both biological parents (Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Ziol-Guest et

al., 2015). Quantitative studies have shown that students living with a single parent are at greater risk for poor attendance, increased discipline problems, and lower academic achievement than students living with both biological parents (Bennett, 1995; Duncan & Murane, 2011; George & Levin, 2015; O'Malley et al., 2015; Wossmann, 2015; Ziol-Guest et al., 2015). Other studies have concluded the negative impact of divorce on children, both socially and educationally (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Mauer & Pleck, 2006). The majority of studies in this area used methods of observation or surveys conducted primarily by adults. For this reason, a qualitative phenomenological study was chosen for this research. Qualitative research allowed me to understand the feelings and perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenological research is "a qualitative method that attempts to understand participants' perspective and views of social reality" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 100). "The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Phenomenological research can also be described as a study in which one tries to explain a phenomenon (Joyner, Rouse, & Glatthorn, 2013). I attempted to gain an understanding, from the student's perspective, of how a student living with a single parent became academically successful.

To gain the student's perspective, a semistructured face-to-face interview was chosen for this research. By utilizing a semistructured interview, I was allowed to use follow-up questions or probe for clarification to help understand the participants' explanation of a sub question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Face-to-face interviews allowed me a chance to establish a positive rapport with the participant. By gaining the participants confidence and trust, he/she felt more at ease answering questions truthfully. Face-to-face interviews also have the highest response rates (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The face-to-face interviews were video recorded for accuracy of the

participants' responses and nonverbal cues (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Very few handwritten notes were taken during the interviews in an attempt to maintain the focus on the participants' responses. Handwritten notes contained reminders for me to review the video recording for specific verbal or nonverbal cues.

A typical sample size used for a phenomenological study is 5-25 (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). For the purpose and convenience of this research, 12 academically successful college aged students located within a 150-mile radius of my home in Southern Illinois were selected. Purposeful convenience sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Purposeful sampling allowed me to select the participants, the number of participants, and a specific type of sampling strategy (Creswell, 2007). The research is being conducted through a phenomenological design, therefor it is necessary that the participants lived the experience being studied. Therefore, purposeful selection of participants was necessary. Convenience sampling allowed me to identify participants that were accessible (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). Using purposeful convenience sampling, I selected participants based on a particular criteria and accessibility (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

Research Questions

"A phenomenological study tries to answer the question, what is it like to experience such-and-such?" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 145). Three overriding or central questions were developed with this in mind. The central questions were broken down into sub questions. Sub questions were the "core questions asked during the data collection" (Creswell, 2007, p. 141) (Appendix A). As questions arose during the interviews, I also asked for clarification as the interview proceeded (Creswell, 2007).

The following questions were the central questions of this study:

1) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

2) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

3) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

Setting

I conducted the interviews in a mutually agreed upon location. I minimized the travel of the participant and met the participant in a public facility of his/her choice. The participant was relaxed and comfortable with the interview location and facility so that he/she was able to respond openly and freely. The potential for outside distractions was minimized (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). A description of the setting was kept in my notes based on my observations of the setting.

Participants

To begin the selection process of candidates, numerous Southern Illinois high school administrators were contacted with a description of the research. Each was asked to reach out to former students that met the participant criteria for this research. Each school administrator sought permission of a potential research candidate to share the potential candidate's contact information with me. Once the potential research candidate's contact information was received by me, I sent the candidate a brief questionnaire (Appendix B). The responses in the questionnaire determined if the candidate met the following criteria for participation in this study.

1) Participants were enrolled in a trade school, college, or university or a recent

graduate of such institution.

2) Participants were between the ages 18-25.

3) Participants lived with a single parent during their middle and high school years (primarily grades sixth through twelfth). The reason for living with a single parent (divorce, death of a parent, child out of wedlock, etc.) was not necessary for this study but is noted in the research.

5) Gender was not a factor in the selection process, but is noted within the study.

6) Race was not a factor in the selection process, but is noted within the study.

7) Economics was not a factor in the selection process, but is noted within the study.

8) A total of 12 participants were interviewed for this study.

Information was given to the participants regarding the study. The participants were able to schedule a face-to-face meeting with me prior to conducting the interview to receive more details regarding the study or meet with me personally before choosing to participate. The information contained in the permission form (Appendix C) outlined the format and type of interview to take place. Specific interview questions were not discussed or given in advance to prevent any bias or skewing of the data. Participants were able to request the overall results of the research, but not each individual participants' specific responses.

Data Collection

Interviews, document collection, and a reference from the participant's high school administrator were the three forms of data collection to ensure validity of the research. A video recording was taken of each interview. The video recordings were used to review participant responses. The recordings insured that the quotes from participants were accurate and were used to look for any nonverbal cues from the participants. Very few written notes were taken during

the interviews. Seidman (2013) suggests that listening is the most important part of the interview process. I listened to what was being said, concentrated on the substance for complete understanding, and decided whether what was heard was as detailed as I would like it to be (Seidman, 2013). Few hand written notes were taken during the interview as not to disrupt or distract the participant. All data was secured in my possession.

The second source of data collection was through the use of a questionnaire in which the participant provided documentation of their educational success. The questionnaire used was the same questionnaire (Appendix B) used to screen participants for this study. This questionnaire provided self-reported demographic information, background information, and limited questions pertaining to the participant's household.

The third source of data collection was in the form of a reference from the participant's high school administrator. The reference was obtained during the screening of the candidates. By obtaining the administrator's reference during the participant selection process, the administrator was unaware if his/her candidate was chosen for the study, thereby maintaining the anonymity of the participant. The recommendation of the high school administrator was used to verify the candidate was academically successful in high school, attended a post-secondary institution, and lived with a single parent.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis, it was necessary to maintain anonymity of the participant in order to protect the participant from harm (Creswell, 2007). Protecting the identity of the participant in phenomenological research is important. One way to ensure anonymity of the participant was to give a "fictitious name to preserve confidentiality" (Joyner et al., 2013, p. 231). Each participant was given a fictitious identity used throughout the research. Utilizing a

fictitious identity in the data analysis allowed the true identity of the participant to remain confidential.

I analyzed the data according to the four methods suggested by John Creswell (2007) for phenomenological studies. First, I compiled responses relevant to the topic and discarded irrelevant responses. Secondly, I looked for common statements, phrases, and feelings among the interviewees. Third, I looked for varying perspectives and viewpoints among the interviewees. Fourth, I compiled the meaningful data and wrote an overall narrative describing the students' relevant responses to the interview questions.

Coding for this phenomenological study took place according to Creswell's (2007) suggestions for coding. Creswell's (2007) suggestions start with describing the phenomenon taking place. This step required that I begin describing the experiences of the participant before making any judgments regarding the participants' comments. Secondly, Creswell (2007) suggests classifying the data into codes and themes. This required looking for significant statements from each participant and grouping those statements into meaningful units or groups. By categorizing the participants' statements, the data could be interpreted. I wrote a narrative and description explaining what happened or how the phenomenon was experienced for each of the groups or meaningful units (Creswell, 2007).

I also analyzed looking for similarities or differences of responses based upon participant demographics (Creswell, 2007). The participants' responses were analyzed for commonalities or discrepancies based on the participants' gender, race, religion, family economics, and parent gender. Even though the sample size was a limiting factor in drawing any definite conclusions to the phenomena based on participant demographics, the information could be helpful for future

studies and research. Future research can draw upon these summations to formulate new research ideas or continue the current research in this area.

Ethics

Conducting face-to-face interviews, recording the interviews that discuss the participant's upbringing, and analyzing the participant's personal documents had the potential to create ethical violations. The participants felt comfortable in sharing personal information. The participants' responses and information provided during the research must be truthful and accurate. This required the participant to have the trust and confidence in me. One way I earned the trust of the participant was by ensuring the participant's identity remained anonymous. If the participant trusted me and believed his/her responses would remain anonymous, the participant was more likely to talk openly and truthfully about their lived experience. The Participant Agreement (Appendix C) outlines the steps and procedures Itook to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and the well-being of the participant during the research (Joyner et al., 2013).

"Because their data collection has inevitably been influenced by their own assumptions and values they openly acknowledge their biases and speculate on how these may have affected what they did, what data they collected, and how they interpreted their results" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013, p. 312). I acknowledge my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of students that have grown up in single parent households and their academic achievement. I have been a high school administrator over fifteen years. I was an assistant principal for three years in a high school of approximately 300 students, 98% White, and 50% low income. I have spent four years as an assistant principal and ten years as the principal of a high school of approximately 950 students, 75% white, 10% black, 10% mixed races, and 65% low income. As a result, the I have dealt with discipline, attendance, and academics with students from various backgrounds and

family structures. My contact with parents/guardians resulting from discipline, attendance, and academic issues often involved a single parent or someone outside the home (a relative, foster parent, or family friend). With this being said, I found it important to analyze the reasons some students living with a single parent are able to achieve academic success. I found this topic interesting because I typically have not dealt with academically successful students living with a single parent. Although I have a background in dealing with academically challenged high school students from a single parent family, he had no preconceived notion or bias to determine what makes students living with a single parent academically successful.

Conclusion

The phenomenological study was conducted using Creswell's (2007), Leedy and Ormrod (2013), and Seidman's (2013) suggestions for conducting a phenomenological study. I interviewed 12 individuals that were academically successful in high school, from a single parent home, and were attending or recently graduated from a post-secondary institution. Participants were required to complete the proper forms agreeing to the phenomenological study. The data from these interviews was compiled and analyzed using both Leedy and Ormrod (2013) and Creswell's (2007) methods for analyzing phenomenological research. Using participants' interviews and documents, this qualitative study intended to understand the reason "why" the participants of this study were academically successful as compared to the majority of their peers from single parent families that were not academically successful. Through direct questioning and documentation, reasons appeared as to "why" these students from single parent households were academically successful when the statistical data says that students living with single parents are less likely to be academically successful.

Chapter 4: Results of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the individuals, events, and other factors that led to the academic success of students from single parent families as perceived by the students. Phenomenology was used for this study to record the lived experience of the participant in to a textual format. Chapter 4 discusses the themes that emerged during the 12 semistructured face-to-face interviews and data analysis.

This chapter presents the data analysis and other findings that pertain to the following research questions:

Research Question 1. What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

Research Question 2. What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

Research Question 3. What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

Chapter 4 presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the participant interviews and the questionnaire. Each research question was addressed with the data collected during the participant interviews. As themes emerged throughout the analysis, each was addressed with documentation from the interviews. Direct quotes and other documented evidence was presented to support the themes, data analysis, and conclusions presented by me. Direct quotes from each participant's response to the corresponding question were tabled by the theme to which it pertains. This chapter also presents a summary of the findings.

Research Design

This research was conducted as a qualitative phenomenological study. The purpose of using a phenomenological approach allowed me to gain an understanding of how a student living with a single parent became academically successful, from the student's perspective. Semistructured face-to-face interviews were conducted to allow me the ability to use follow-up questions in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of the participants' feelings and attitudes about their educational success. By conducting face-to-face interviews, Iwas able to establish a trust and rapport with each participant so that the participant would be more likely to give truthful responses. Each sub question was read to the participant. Interviews were video and audio recorded for clarification. Audio recordings were transcribed.

Participants

Table 4.1 lists the demographics of each participant in this study. Purposeful convenience sampling was used to select the participants for this research. Purposeful convenience sampling allowed me to select individuals based on a set of criteria designed by me. The selection of participants began by soliciting area school administrators for potential candidates. Once the name and contact information of the potential participant was received, the individual was contacted to determine if they met the qualifications for the study and would be a willing participant. An initial questionnaire was given to the participant before the interview to verify their qualifications of being a participant in this study and to obtain basic demographic information.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics and Qualifications for This Study

Participant	A	G	Race	GPA	Attendance	Discipline	Post-Secondary
Participant 1	20	M	Mixed (Mom-white, Dad-black)	3.7	Missed an avg. 3 days a year	None	Comm. College, plans on going to 4 year college
Participant 2	21	M	Mixed (Mom-white, Dad-black)	3.5	Good	None	Comm. College, plans on going to 4 year college
Participant 3	18	F	Both white	3.7	Good	None	Comm. College, plans on going to 4 year college
Participant 4	18	F	Mixed (Mom-Hispanic & white, Dad-black)	3.6	Missed 10 days 9th grade, missed 5 days 10-12 grade	1 fight in Jr. High; none in HS	Comm. College, plans on going to 4 year college
Participant 5	22	M	Mixed (Mom-Hispanic & white, Dad-black)	3.1	Good	None	Graduated from university
Participant 6	22	F	Both white	3.5	Missed an avg. 1 day per year	None	Graduated from university
Participant 7	21	M	Both black	3.4	Missed an avg. 3 days per year	None	Enrolled in university
Participant 8	18	F	Mixed (Mom-white, Dad-black)	4	Good	None	Enrolled in university
Participant 9	21	M	Both white	3.2	Good	Very little except for about 6th grade	Enrolled in university
Participant 10	20	M	Mixed (Mom-white, Dad-black)	3	Good	Poor in grade school; Good in HS	Enrolled in university
Participant 11	19	M	Both white	3.8	Never missed	Good, no problems	Comm. College, plans on going to 4 year college
Participant 12	25	F	Both white	3.9	Missed an avg. 4 days per year	Good	Associate's Degree, employed full time in degree field

Note. The table shows the participants demographics and self-reported data. A=age; G=gender; GPA=high school grade point average; Attend=high school attendance; Discipline=high school discipline.

The focus of this study relied on the perceptions of successful high school graduates between the ages of 18-25 that continued their education at a post-secondary institution. Some of the participants are currently enrolled (9/12) in a post-secondary institution, while others have graduated from a post-secondary institution (3/12). A successful high school student was based on students that achieved a 3.0 or higher GPA in high school, had relatively good attendance, and had very few, if any, discipline problems during their high school careers. The participants lived in the Southern Illinois area and primarily with a single parent between the sixth and twelfth grades. Gender, race, and economics were not used as a determining factor in the selection process. The participant was asked to provide demographic information so that it could be analyzed with the rest of the data to determine whether or not any conclusions could be drawn based on gender, race, and economics, even though the sample size was too small to determine any statistical conclusion.

Data Collection

This research was conducted as a phenomenological study of successful high school students growing up primarily in a single parent family. The phenomenological method used for this research was a semistructured face-to-face interview. Using this method allowed the participants to express their perceptions and feelings towards the influences that helped make them successful high school students. Participants filled out a questionnaire of basic personal information and were interviewed face-to-face. The data collected during the interviews and the questionnaire were both analyzed.

I began by collecting names and contact information of potential participants from school administrators. I contacted each individual to describe the type of research study being conducted and to discuss his/her willingness to participate in the research study. The initial

conversation was the first portion of the screening process. Once I determined the potential participant may qualify for the research study and agreed to be interviewed, the potential participant and I chose a time and location in which to meet. Potential participants decided to meet in a location of their choosing. Each participant expressed a comfortability of being interviewed inside an office within a school building. Participants were given a participant agreement form (Appendix C) to sign and return to me. Each participant was given a copy of the signed participant agreement form to keep. The participant agreement form outlined the procedures, a brief description of the research, the steps I would take to maintain the participant's anonymity, and my contact information.

The research began by asking the participant to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix B). The questionnaire asked basic demographic information, self-reported school data, and other personal information of each participant. First, the information from the questionnaire was used to validate that each participant met the criteria for the study. Secondly, the demographic information from the questionnaire was used in the analysis to look for commonalities in the responses from the interviewees based on the participant's gender, the participant's ethnicity, the educational background of the single parent, and the gender of single parent.

Each interview was video recorded. The recordings were locked in a secured location known only to me. I transcribed each interview using the video recordings. Participant responses were written verbatim underneath each research sub question. Information and direct quotes from the questionnaires and transcriptions were placed in a spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was organized based on the category of questions from the questionnaire and interview. The data in the spreadsheet was then analyzed looking for similarities or differences in the participants' responses. I coded the data looking for common themes that might emerge. In

order to secure the anonymity of each participant, each participant was assigned a fictitious name. The name of each participant appears as Participant # in the transcriptions, tables, and results.

Five themes emerged from the meaningful data. Within each theme, a description explaining the phenomena was written in narrative form. A table listing the direct quotes from each participant, as they related to each particular theme, was also created. The literature review discusses seven areas of quantitative studies that relate to the effects of family structure on a child's education. Each of the seven areas were crossed reference to the themes that emerged from this research. While much of the qualitative data gathered from the phenomenological study both supports and contradicts quantitative data in this area, five particular themes emerged from the participants' perceptions.

Study Findings

As a result of the data analysis, I was able to determine major themes that were present within the interviews. The analysis included an in-depth review of the transcribed interviews. Through this review, information was sorted into various categories. The interviews and written data were examined multiple times looking for common phrases, thoughts, and feelings among the participants. Each category of questions was examined independently.

Five major themes emerged from the data review. Table 4.2 shows the five themes that emerged in relationship to the research questions during the data analysis. First, participants believed that their parents had some level of expectation for them to earn good grades and graduate from high school. Second, there were discussions at home regarding school and college. The level and length of those discussions varied greatly amongst the participants and their respective parent. Third, the majority (9/12) of participants felt their parents supported

them in their extracurricular activities, although it was expressed in a variety of ways. Fourth, participants named at least one individual outside of the home that helped influence their education. Those credited with being a positive influence were coaches, teachers, guidance counselors, grandparents, and siblings. Fifth, no one expressed any major life-altering event that influenced his or her education. Many of the events during their adolescent years were negative and made education more difficult. While participation may not be considered an event, every participant (12/12) in this study was involved in extracurricular activities during his/her educational career. Participants expressed that the expectations of their parent, communication about school, and encouragement received from the influence outside of the home were the major factors in their educational success.

Table 4.2

Research Questions and Themes

Research Question 1: What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?	1) Parents expected kids to go to school and make good grades. 2) There was some discussion about school/college at home. The degree and length of conversations varied. 3) The majority (9/12) felt their parents supported their extracurricular activities by attending and discussing their activities.
Research Question 2: What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?	4) The majority (11/12) of participants named another individual, besides the parent, that helped influence their education. Seven participants named a coach, teacher, or guidance counselor. Four participants named a grandparent or sibling. The encouragement and communication with the outside influence was important to each participant.
Research Question 3: What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?	5) There were no specific events that helped lead to the students' educational success. A common thread of being involved in extracurricular activities emerged from the interviews. All participants (12/12) participated in extracurricular activities at school.

Note. The five main themes that resulted from the overriding research questions.

Results

This section describes the five themes that emerged from this phenomenological study and their relationship to the corresponding research question.

Research Question 1. What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

Three major themes emerged within research question one. The three themes are that there was parental expectation that students to go to school and make good grades, there was discussion at home about school on a regular basis, and there was support from their parents regarding extracurricular activities.

Theme 1: Parent Expectations

The first major theme from participants that emerged was the belief that each felt their parent had some level of expectation of them to go to school and make good grades (see Table 4.3). While participants expressed different reasons their parents had these expectations, all of the participants knew that they needed to go to school and get good grades. Eleven out of 12 participants were told verbally, in one form or another, that education and grades were important. Some stated that their parents helped them with homework. Some participants were encouraged to go to school. Other participants were told directly that they needed to be educationally successful and to do their best in school.

Table 4.3

Participants Parental Educational Expectations

	Educational Expectations
Participant 1	Only encouraged kids to go to school.
Participant 2	"Expected me to be on honor roll or high honor roll. B- to C was unacceptable. Told me I could do better."
Participant 3	"Mom helped with homework until she left the house; instilled in me when younger that school was important and I needed to go to college."
Participant 4	"Mom always told me she wanted me to keep my grades up, but there was never a full conversation about school; everybody wanted me to graduate high school because nobody else did."
Participant 5	"She definitely was on me to graduate. That was it. College didn't cross my mind until I wanted to keep playing football. Until then, I was totally cool with going to community college. I probably would've dropped out. Definitely in junior high she pushed me to honors classes."
Participant 6	"Very important. School came first all of the time. At the early age, school was very important, and you did your homework, then you had fun. It was instilled in my brain, that if I don't do good what do I really have?"
Participant 7	"I think when my mom got her master's degree, that kind of set an expectation for me. There was a constant reminder of being on us for doing good in school."
Participant 8	"Mom expected to do well and get a degree. Never congratulated for good grades but rather you're doing what you need to do."
Participant 9	"The only thing my sister and I were expected was to not run our mouth to counselors and things like that. They put it as, 'you get us in trouble, you'll be in trouble.' I was already scared as it is."
Participant 10	"(I) was told, 'No one can take a degree or education from you.'" Expectation was to be successful.
Participant 11	"In grade school, I made straight A's. They expected that in high school. I made mostly A's and a B here and there. Getting a B was like an F them. My dad would be like 'you have 2 B's right now, what are you doing?'"
Participant 12	"They did not expect me to get straight A's on every test. They expected me to show up and do my best."

Note. Parental educational expectations were self-reported by the participant.

One method of expressing educational expectations from the parent was direct communication regarding the student's grades. Participant 2 stated that his parent "expected me to be on honor roll or high honor roll. B- to C was unacceptable. He (dad) told me I could do better." Participant 11 stated, "In grade school, I made straight A's. They expected that in high

school. I made mostly A's and a B here and there. Getting a B was like an F to them. My dad would be like, 'you have 2 B's right now, what are you doing?'"

Some participants recognized their parent educational expectations through their emphasis on homework. Participant 6 stated, "At the early age, school was very important and you did your homework then you had fun," and Participant 3 added, "Mom helped with homework until she left the house." Participant 3 went on to say that when her mom left the house, the necessity to continue doing homework and making good grades had been established: "My mom would always make me sit down after school and do my homework. She would make sure if I was struggling that I would go and get help before or after school; she was just always there and very supportive. Whenever she left (6th grade) it was just kind of up to me whether I had my homework or not."

Other participants recognized expectations through the emphasis on appropriate behavior. In particular, "Like in grade school, I got in trouble a few times and she (mom) would be the one that came to school. I even got disciplined in the bathroom (at school) a few times," commented Participant 10. Participant 9 explained that his lack of discipline problems at school was out of fear of his parents. He stated, "I was already scared as it is. If I get them in trouble it was going to be worse for me." Participant 6 recalled receiving consequences at home for inappropriate behavior at school stating, "So, in middle school, there was a time when we all had iPads. I was being inappropriate on them and she (mom) grounded me indefinitely for that. There wasn't even any excuses about it and I knew."

Participant 9 explained that his parent's educational expectations were from a negative point of view. He elaborated on a poor home environment that involved criminal activity. The family moved across various states and school districts multiple times due to adverse family

conditions. In this situation, Participant 9 expressed his parent's educational expectations as one of covering for the family: "The only thing my sister and I were expected was to not run our mouth to counselors and things like that. They put it as 'you get us in trouble, you'll be in trouble.' I was already scared as it is." As a result, he and his sister were expected to attend school, make good grades, and not draw any type of attention to the family. The expectations for being a good student would eliminate any suspicions from school officials of a poor home life, thus not having law enforcement or DCFS come to the house.

Many of the participants recalled their first realization of educational expectations at an early age. Most recalled a situation, conversation, or routines that helped them understand the importance of education during their early years. As in the majority of statements above, the participants typically start with an example or scenario of something that occurred early in their life or educational career. They recall a situation that typifies the parent's ongoing expectations of their schoolwork and behavior. Statements begin or include "So in middle school" and "At the early age." Most participants recognized the importance of education at a young age. Therefore, regardless of the hardships and family situations during their adolescent years, they continued to strive for success through high school and college. The expectations were set early on in their educational career.

Theme 2: Discussing School at Home

The second major theme that emerged was the amount of discussion centered on school that took place within the home. Ten out of 12 participants reported having school-centered discussion on a regular basis. Two out of 12 reported very little to no school-centered discussions. School discussions focused on student grades, student discipline, extracurricular activities, college, and other school related topics. The amount of time and types of

conversations that took place varied greatly (see Table 4.4). Some participants reported school discussions lasting only a few minutes a week while others reported lengthy discussions around the dinner table. Participant 9 reported almost zero discussions regarding school unless it involved not drawing attention to the family, home, or parents.

Table 4.4

Time Participants and Parents Spent Discussing School

	Time Spent Discussing School
Participant 1	Roughly 5 hours a week."
Participant 2	"3 to 4 times a week in grade school and 1 to 2 times a week in high school."
Participant 3	"Talk with mom 10-15 hours a week before she moved out; after words it was 1-2 hours a week; dad maybe 0-30 minutes a week if that."
Participant 4	"Very little."
Participant 5	"We would talk sports, but I wouldn't talk school with her in high school. I would say 'Yeah I did it (homework)' and that was it."
Participant 6	"Probably every night at the dinner table and dinner would take an hour. We would all share."
Participant 7	"She checked my grades a lot, which kept me on my toes."
Participant 8	"5 days a week. Every day when I came home from school, we would talk about school. She would ask, 'How was your day?'"
Participant 9	"Very little to none."
Participant 10	"Talked with mom on the phone about school once a week. Discussed school with dad 2-3 times a week."
Participant 11	"It was a vague question every day. 'What did you learn today?' I may have had answers or not. It was every day."
Participant 12	"Usually it was like 'Did you get your homework done?' On average at least 5 to 10 minutes every day."

Note. Self-reported time spent discussing school, schoolwork, or school activities.

The amount of time spent discussing school ranged greatly. Some reported discussing school every day. Participant 8 stated that she discussed school with her mom each school day: "5 days a week. Every day when I came home from school, we would talk about school. She would ask 'How was your day?'" Participant 6 recalled discussing school with her parent every night: "Probably every night at the dinner table and dinner would take an hour. We would all share." Others reported only discussing school 1-2 times a week or 0-30 minutes a week in high school. Two participants reported having very little to no discussions about school with their parents.

Another aspect of parental and student discussions pertaining to school is that the parent initiated most conversations. Whether the discussions were during grade school, high school, or college, the parent usually began the conversation with a question. Students did not indicate that they initiated conversations about school. Conversations would begin with questions from parents such as, "How was your day?" or "How was school?" Regardless of the length or depth of the discussion, the parent generally showed an interest in the child's education by initiating a conversation about school.

Table 4.5 represents the participants' description of their discussions about college with their parent. Most participants (9/12) recall discussing college, even if the conversations did not begin until high school. Participant 10 stated, "(We) talked regularly about college from Jr. High to high school." Participant 8 commented, "Frequently in high school" and Participant 10, "We would talk about it every time a college letter would come in the mail," when asked how often college was discussed with the parent. When Participant 12 was asked about discussions of college with her parent, she stated the discussions were, "Often enough that I can hear my dad in my head saying, 'you're going to college.'" Three participants admitted that their discussions

about college with their parent were none or very little.

Table 4.5

Time Participants and Parents Spent Discussing College

	Time Spent Discussing College
Participant 1	"None, more implied conversations than direct."
Participant 2	"Not much until my junior year. The conversation was more about what I was thinking."
Participant 3	None; mom doesn't even know what college I am in; I haven't talked to my dad; I had to fill out all of my own FASFA and find my dad's tax information
Participant 4	"Very little; Mom told me she wasn't worried about college because nobody else in the family did; when I got my acceptance letter she freaked out with excitement,"
Participant 5	"I wanted to go somewhere I could play football and my options were limited to about 4 schools that I could play at in the area, but staying at home was not a choice that I made. She was like 'you're staying at home.' College, she wasn't too involved there. I had to do it all on my own. She was always there for other stuff."
Participant 6	"Not until about junior year. It was left up to me to make it happen or figure it out, but her pushing me."
Participant 7	"I think it started when I probably reached high school or higher levels of high school. So we had those talks all the time that basketballs not there forever but college will definitely be there."
Participant 8	"Frequently in high school. Now it's about once a month. I send her updates on my grades."
Participant 9	"They knew that college would be a stretch. They would talk to me about trade school. When colleges started coming in talking to me about sports, they were more excited than I was."
Participant 10	"Talked regularly about college from Jr. high to high school. Became more frequent towards junior/senior year."
Participant 11	"We would talk about it every time a college letter would come in the mail. He would say 'you need to call them and get as much information as you can.'"
Participant 12	"Often enough that I can hear my dad in my head saying, 'you're going to college.' A lot when I got to be a junior and senior."

Note. Self-reported time spent discussing college.

Theme 3: Support for Extracurricular Activities

The third theme that emerged was that the majority (9/12) of participants felt their parent was supportive of their participation in extracurricular activities (see Table 4.6). Most of them

reported that their parent and other family members would attend their activities when it was possible for them to do so. The participants also felt that the extracurricular activities provided them with structure and guidance.

Table 4.6

Participants Perception of Extracurricular Support from Their Parents

	Extracurricular Support
Participant 1	Very little, didn't go to many activities.
Participant 2	Both parents came to basketball games. Mom came to soccer games. Grandparents came to games.
Participant 3	No extracurricular support; "Dad did not come to any performances including graduation; mom came to graduation, but that was it."
Participant 4	"She didn't come to all my events; I had to tell her when she could or couldn't come because she was so bad at that time."
Participant 5	"My mom was supportive in football activities. She would come to all the games high school and college. She did not support lacrosse. She hates lacrosse."
Participant 6	Very supportive. "(Mom) coached my Jr. High team. After the 2 youngest sisters were born it was harder for her to make all the events, but she would ask how the game went. She attended all the home events."
Participant 7	"Mom was at every game. It was great. He (dad) would come to as much games as possible, if not, he would listen to the radio at work. Grandparents and cousins, I had a lot of family support."
Participant 8	"Mom was always there in the front row for activities and events." Very supportive.
Participant 9	"They were not sports people. They never encouraged me to do anything."
Participant 10	Very supportive. "Dad came to most sporting events. Mom could if she was around. Mom would call and ask how things went and keep up with extracurricular events."
Participant 11	"My dad hasn't missed any games. We didn't take a summer vacation. Our summer vacation was basketball. He didn't miss one high school game. He went to every one of them. My mom was just here and there. It was a hit or miss."
Participant 12	"He (dad) was great. If I played sports, he was there every single game. My mom went to a few, but I feel like he (dad) was my number one fan."

Note. The amount of support for their involvement in extracurricular activities from their parent, as perceived by the participant.

Research Question 2. What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

While every participant stated that one of their parents was the most influential person, they also recognized other individuals outside the home as also being influential in their educational success. Outside influence emerged as the fourth theme. Students recognized additional influences outside the home (see Table 4.7). Nine out of 12 participants recognized someone from their school as being the additional influence. Three out of the 12 participants identified grandparents or siblings as being additional influences in their education. The participants felt the additional influence gave them the extra encouragement, guidance, advice, and structure they may have been lacking by living with a single parent.

Table 4.7

Influential People and Individuals Involved with Education (other than Parents)

	Influential People Involved with Education
Participant 1	coaches and teachers, no one outside of school
Participant 2	coaches, grandparents, mom's friend, dad, and entire community
Participant 3	teacher and guidance counselor, no one outside of school after 6th grade
Participant 4	teacher and coach, My teacher and coach helped push me; my coach gave me discipline
Participant 5	high school coaches and teachers, football coaches
Participant 6	grandparents and older brother
Participant 7	coaches, teachers, and administrators
Participant 8	grade school teachers
Participant 9	grandparents and older brother
Participant 10	coaches, teachers, and administrators
Participant 11	grade school teachers and Sunday school teacher
Participant 12	older sister

Note. Influential people involved in the participants' education, as perceived by the participant.

All of participants felt their educational success came from the ongoing communication and encouragement from the outside influence (see Table 4.8). Participant 4 stated, “Ms. [redacted], she’s always been like a second mom to me. She’s always been there for me. (She) pushed me to be better and help me when I needed it.” Participant 5 expressed gratitude towards his coaches, “My football coaches I had, like a lot of them, I was really blessed with that worked in the building. They gave me guidance. They helped me out through school. I went to my football coaches for any kind of help. If I needed help on an essay, I would go to my football coach.” Participant 3 credited her teacher and guidance counselor for being supportive, “My teachers were really supportive. That’s kind of where I turn to for reassurance and for guidance. My guidance counselor, Mr. [redacted], he was very supportive.” Participant 11 recognized the impact of his grade school teachers monitoring his progress through high school: “My grade school teachers, which I became close with. They became close and treated me like one of their own. They kept up with me and texted me to make sure I was doing what I needed to do. They made sure I got everything filled out for college.”

Table 4.8

The Amount of Encouragement from an Outside Influence

	Encouragement from Outside Influence
Participant 1	"A lot of coaches in high school such as [redacted] and Coach [redacted], they were always there to push me, especially my senior year. They were always there after football practice and before football practice to encourage me to get better and to apply what I had learned out on the field and apply it to class."
Participant 2	"Growing up, the coaches always made sure your grades were up so that you are eligible. I would say it was pretty much like the whole community."
Participant 3	"My teachers were really supportive. That's kind of where I turn to for reassurance and for guidance. My guidance counselor… was very supportive."
Participant 4	"Once I joined dance team he (coach) disciplined me and showed me that there's more to life than what it seems. By having discipline and being in sports it could really make a difference in my future. And Ms. [redacted], she's always been like a 2nd mom to me. She's always been there for me. Pushed me to be better and help me when I needed it."
Participant 5	"My football coaches I had, like a lot of them I was really blessed with that worked in the building. They gave me guidance. They help me out through school. I went to my football coaches for any kind of help. If I needed help on an essay, I would go to my football coach. My mom will still make fun of me today because she will be like 'I need to get a football coach to try to do this.' They were the only ones I would listen to for advice, because I wasn't really listening to her."
Participant 6	"My grandmother was probably the biggest one. She was a language arts teacher in the school I ended up graduating grade school from. Even grade school I got my first B ever from my grandma and my mom was so upset. It was because I didn't get all of my AR points. Her rule was if you don't have all of your AR points you cannot get an A."
Participant 7	"When you're on a certain team you're held to a standard with grades and if you're not doing your job than that kind of relates to your performance on the court or behavior on the court. All in all, my coach kind of kept me level headed with that aspect."
Participant 8	"I would save my big brother [redacted] and my grandparents still call me and tell me how proud they are of me. That helps me so that I can keep going."
Participant 9	"My grandpa…. he wasn't afraid to call me out for anything like if I was slacking off in class. He wouldn't tell me how to do it but he would tell me, 'It's not good enough and that I was capable of better.' He treated me as what I could be instead of what I had always been. He gave me tools to realize that I had opportunities to better my life, but he couldn't do it for me."
Participant 10	"I would say growing up it had a lot to do with the schools I went to. The counselors, principals, teachers, and coaches. They all looked after me to make sure I would be successful."
Participant 11	"A lot for the good. My grade school teachers, which I became close with. When I went to a small school like [redacted], they became close and treated me like one of their own. They kept up with me and texted me to make sure I was doing what I needed to do. They made sure I got everything filled out for college. They would be on me the whole time."
Participant 12	"Definitely my sister. I knew how to write my name before I went into kindergarten because of her. I feel like watching her kind of made me want to work that much harder. She was very helpful."

Note. The amount and type of encouragement from an influence outside of the home, as perceived by the participant.

Outside influences had a positive impact on each of the participants. Some of the influence came as a verbal reassurance and encouragement to be successful. Other participants were influenced with quality advice. Outside influences also were available to help with homework and social issues. Whichever form of support the outside influence gave to the participant, this influence picked up any slack from the lack of a second parent.

Research Question 3. What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

Participants did not express any major life-altering event or events that changed their perception of education. Events such as residential moves, school moves, and family transitions became a distraction, but did not stop them from becoming successful students. Most of the events expressed were negative and a hindrance rather than a benefit to their education. Participants did not express directly how they overcame the many negative events in their lives or a specific motivating factor that pushed them through a successful educational career, other than those expressed previously through educational expectations and outside influences.

The fifth theme that emerged is a common thread among the participants of being involved in extracurricular activities. While the majority (9/12) of participants stated that at least one of their parents were supportive of their participation in extracurricular activities, all (12/12) of the participants were involved in one or more extracurricular activities at various times during their high school careers. The majority of participants were involved in sporting events, one in dance, and one in fine arts.

Participant 1 stated in regards to his football coach, “They were always there to push me, especially my senior year. They were always there after football practice and before football practice to encourage me to get better and to apply what I had learned out on the field and apply

it to class." Participant 4 described how being a part of the dance team helped her improve her grades and attendance by explaining, "Once I joined dance team he (dance coach) disciplined me and showed me that there's more to life than what it seems. By having discipline and being in sports it could really make a difference in my future." While including a variety of people in those that helped him become successful, Participant 10 included his coaches when he said, "I would say growing up it had a lot to do with the schools I went to. The counselors, principal, teachers, and coaches. They all looked after me to make sure I would be successful."

As stated earlier, many of the outside influences were coaches or sponsors. Extracurricular activities provided an avenue for students to meet positive influences that they may have lacked at home. Participant 9 summed up his extracurricular experience with, "When you're on a certain team you're held to a standard with grades and if you're not doing your job then that kind of relates to your performance on the court or behavior on the court. If you're succeeding in education, then that relates to the person you are and reflects on you and your coach. All in all, my coach kind of kept me level headed with that aspect." For those that did not mention a coach or sponsor as being an influential part of their education, they were still involved in extracurricular activities. Outside of mentioning the coach or sponsor as an influence, none of the participants expressed any other link between their participation in extracurricular activities and educational success.

Summary

The data and analysis in Chapter 4 was collected through interviews and a questionnaire of 12 participants between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five that had lived primarily with a single parent between sixth and twelfth grades. The research questions focused on the influences inside and outside the home and events that led to the student's educational success. The main

focus was parental influence and a secondary influence from outside the home. During the interview and research analysis, five major themes emerged. The five themes represent a common link to educational success of students living with a single parent.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of this phenomenological study. I discuss the data gathered from this research and its relationship to current and past research. Chapter 5 expresses my interpretations of the findings, the implications on previous research, the implications on learning theories, the implications of the results for educators, and recommendations for future research.

Review of Methodology

This study was conducted using a qualitative phenomenological approach. I used semistructured face-to-face interviews. This method was used so I could gain an understanding, from the student's perspective, of the influences that helped a student growing up with a single parent become academically successful. I contacted school administrators in Southern Illinois seeking potential participants for this study. School administrators gave me names and contact information of potential participants. Purposeful convenience sampling was used to select the 12 participants interviewed in this study. I contacted the potential participants by phone to discuss the type of research being conducted, the participants' qualifications for the study, and their willingness to participate in the study. Once I believed the potential participant met the qualifications for the study and the participant was willing to participate in the study, the potential participant and I agreed to a time and location to meet for the interview.

Participants chose to be interviewed in an office of a local school building. The total time spent with each participant ranged from thirty-five minutes to one hour. After initial introductions, the participants read and signed the participation form. The participants filled out the initial questionnaire prior to the interviews. The length of interviews varied from eighteen minutes to thirty-nine minutes. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were given an

opportunity to add any additional thoughts or information that may not have been covered during the interview.

Data from the questionnaire and interviews was used in the data analysis. After reviewing the questionnaire and the video recording of the interview from each participant, I transcribed each interview. Data from the questionnaire and transcriptions was coded and placed into a spreadsheet. I analyzed the coded data looking for common themes.

Interpretation of the Findings

This phenomenological study addressed the following questions:

1) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

2) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

3) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

I discovered five major themes from the research data. The five major themes that emerged are parental expectations, communication about school at home, parental support for extracurricular activities, a positive influential person outside the home, and extracurricular participation. These five themes proved to be important to a student's educational success, as expressed by the participant.

Three themes that emerged from research question one allow me to conclude that the influences inside the home, particularly from the parents, play a major role in a student's educational success. Every participant first discussed parental expectations. Each participant felt their parent had high expectations for their educational success. Second, each participant

recounted some level of discussion about school at home. Most school discussions were routine. Third, the participants felt their parents supported them in their extracurricular activities by attending their events and discussing their activities with them.

When expectations inside the home are high for a child's educational success, rules and structure within the home are set to meet those expectations (Jafarov, 2015; Jeynes, 2007). Parents with high educational expectations help students with homework, expect students to attend school regularly, and expect students to have good behavior while at school (Froiland & Davison, 2014; Jeynes, 2007; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The expectations are often reinforced at home when students are required to complete homework before participating in recreational or fun activities. Parents with high educational expectations enforce additional consequences at home for poor grades or poor behavior at school (Froiland & Davison, 2014; Jeynes, 2007; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Consistent routines, rules, and consequences at home based on the child's homework, school behavior, and attendance provide the child with a constant reinforcement of the importance of education (Jeynes, 2007).

Expectations were often expressed through the conversations that parents had with their child about school (Jafarov, 2015; Jeynes, 2007; Jeynes, 2011). While communication varied greatly in degree and length among each participant and parent, there was a consistent discussion about school in the home. Some discussions lasted close to an hour while other discussions may have only lasted a few minutes. Some of the discussions included a simple "how was your day?" with a brief response from the child or much lengthier hour-long discussions recounting the entire school day. Other conversations centered on attending college. Regardless of the type, length, or topic of the discussion, the child knew education was important to the parent by the parent's questioning of the student about school. Participant responses indicated communication

as an essential component of parental involvement supporting a child's educational success, much like previous research (Jafarov, 2015; Jeynes, 2007; Jeynes, 2011).

Participants also felt their parents generally supported them in extracurricular activities. Parents demonstrated their support of extracurricular activities by discussing and attending their activities. While discussing extracurricular participation, students were generally pleased and motivated by their parental support for their participation. In some instances, parents were the initial motivating factor of the student's participation. Through conversations and attending the child's activities, parents demonstrated their support for their child's extracurricular participation.

The second research question discussed influences outside of the home that the participant felt led to their educational success. One major theme arose from this question. Eleven out of the 12 participants recognized another individual outside of the home that positively influenced their education. Seven out of 12 participants cited a coach, teacher or guidance counselor from school as being a positive influence outside of the home. Others named a grandparent or sibling as having an impact. I believe the additional positive influences are needed to pick up the slack from the lack of a second parent. The additional influence outside of the home provides a variety of positive resources including but not limited to general advice for the child through communication, help with homework, guidance for college and careers, and discipline. The additional influence often acts as a second parent by providing advice and encouragement when the single parent is unavailable or is incapable of providing a specific type of support or assistance for the child.

A fifth theme emerged from the third research question. While none of the participants expressed any major life altering events that led to their educational success, a common thread

among all participants was that every one of them participated in at least one or more extracurricular activities during their high school careers. The types of extracurricular activities varied among sports, fine arts, and clubs. I do not believe that simply being on a team or in a club during high school is a guarantee for educational success. I believe there is a close connection between students that participate in extracurricular activities at school and influences outside of the home, as discussed in the previous research question. I believe participating in extracurricular activities provides students with a sense of belonging to a group, the ability to meet new friends, and the additional positive influence from the instructor that takes the place of the second parent.

The findings of this study are significant to parents, teachers, and school personnel. This study shows that students living with a single parent can acquire equal educational success to students living with both biological parents if they are provided with positive influences inside and outside of the home. Schools, teachers, and administrators should create an environment of high educational expectations for all students. Conveying a message of high educational expectations is more than a verbal or written message. While the term expectation is hard to define, school personnel and teachers that set high educational expectations will convey their message through their instructional practices, daily attitudes, rules, discipline, and consistent reinforcement of the importance of education. Secondly, all school personnel should consistently remind students of the importance of education. Constant discussions of the student's grades and the impact it will have on the student's future demonstrates the importance of education. Schoolteachers, coaches, sponsors, and administrators should not underestimate their influence on students. In many situations, students are looking for a positive adult role model outside of the home. More times than not, the influence comes from an adult at school that positively

influences the student. Linking students with additional positive influences is often the result of students participating in extracurricular activities at school. Extracurricular activities provide students with many potential success factors that may be lost by lacking a second parent. Participation in extracurricular activities is often accompanied by routine grade checks, structure, and cooperation skills learned by participating in a group setting.

Parental expectations, communication at home, support for extracurricular participation, a secondary positive influence, and participating in extracurricular activities are key influences to the educational success of a child growing up with a single parent.

Implications on Previous Research

As discussed in Chapter 2, a child growing up with a single parent is less likely to be educationally successful than a child growing up with both biological parents. The majority of research conducted regarding the education of students from single parent households has been quantitative. Numerous quantitative studies have concluded that a child living with a single parent is less likely to graduate high school or obtain a bachelor's degree than a child living with two parents (Abell & Schwartz, 1999; Bennett, 1995; Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000; Duncan & Murnane, 2011; "Effects of Family Structure on Income," n.d., George & Levin, 2015; O'Malley et al., 2015). For the purpose of this research, educational success and academic success were defined as a student that graduated high school and was enrolled in a post-secondary institution or had graduated from a post-secondary institution (Foxx, 2016). The participants selected for this research exhibited many of the characteristics of a successful student as described in Chapter 2. Those characteristics include, but are not limited to respectful, responsible, confident, motivated, emotionally stable, good self-managing, curious, hardworking, studious, and engaged ("Characteristics of Successful Students," n.d.; Chen, 2017; Knafo, 2014). Many of these

characteristics were self-reported by the participant and verified by the school administrator recommending the participant for this study. Participants also self-reported achieving a 3.0 or higher GPA while in high school, generally good attendance, and minimal discipline infractions.

Current research is pointing towards the specific component of parental involvement as the leading contributor towards educational success. Recent studies and meta-analysis show that positive parental expectations have the greatest impact on a student's education and transcend socioeconomics, family structure, mobility, and ethnicity (Bui & Rush, 2016; Fan & Chen; 2001; Froiland & Davison, 2014; Jeynes, 2007). Parental expectations are the parental involvement indicator that is most closely associated with educational success (Fan & Chen, 2001). While it is common for parents from a higher SES backgrounds to have greater educational expectations than those from lower SES backgrounds, parental expectations remain the constant variable for student educational success among all SES groups (Schmitt-Wilson, 2013). Likewise, high parental expectations have the same effect on educational success regardless of ethnicity or family structure (Froiland & Davison, 2014).

Participants in this qualitative study most often expressed parental expectations as a factor of their educational success. They believed that parents regarded education as important and expressed this belief to them. The expression of the parent's educational expectations took on many forms. Participants stated that their parents would verbally tell them they needed to do well in school, while some experienced consequences at home for poor grades or poor behavior at school. Others explained house rules for completing schoolwork before they were allowed to play outside or play video games. For parents and teachers, creating an environment of high expectations is necessary for a student's educational success (Froiland & Davison, 2014; Jeynes, 2011; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Participants in this study believed there was some level of communication at home regarding school. Research supports communication as a leading indicator of a student's educational success (Jafarov, 2015; Jeynes, 2011;). The amount of time spent discussing school activities, homework, or college varied greatly among the participants. While some participants stated that communication with their parent was consistent or every day, others felt the communication was irregular and varied in length. Regardless of the length or topic of communication about school between the parent and child, communication was a key component of parental involvement and the means by which the parents often expressed their educational expectations for the child.

Another form of parental involvement supported by this research is the parent's direct involvement in the student's extracurricular activities. The majority of participants in this study felt their parents were supportive and attended numerous extracurricular functions. Research indicates that parental support for school functions creates a more positive emotional link between the child, parents, and school. This type of parental involvement affects achievement and depression both directly and indirectly (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). When students believe their parents are supportive of activities outside of the regular school day, students are less likely to have social or emotional issues impeding their education (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

This study supports previous research stating that parental involvement is a key component directly affecting a child's education. As stated in this study and previous research, a parent's educational expectations appear to be the leading factor determining a student's academic success regardless of a child's family structure, SES, mobility, gender, ethnicity, or parent's educational level (Bui & Rush, 2016; Fan & Chen, 2001; Froiland & Davison, 2014;

Jeynes, 2007). Other parental involvement factors such as communication about school (Jafarov, 2015; Jeynes, 2011) and support for a child's extracurricular activities (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014) were also validated by this study and previous research.

Implication on Learning Theories

The research for this study was based on three human developmental theories. The three theories discussed are Ivan Pavlov's classical conditioning, B. F. Skinner's operant conditioning, and Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bussey & Bandura, 1999, Iverson, 1992; Morsello, 2010; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). The theory behind this research suggests that a child's educational success begins at home with the raising of a child. Examining the extent to which these learning theories describe the parents raising of a child, one might predict the educational success of the child ("Ivan Pavlov," 1998; "B.F. Skinner," 2015; Moore, 1999). Likewise, educators are constantly using classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and social cognitive theory to form a child's behavior and social skills while at school (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Iverson, 1992; Moresella, 2010).

Pavlov's classical conditioning is a reflexive response to a stimulus. Such responses are involuntary natural responses which the individual has learned (Moresella, 2010). While participants in this study may have mentioned reactions to specific stimuli from their parents, the results of this study did not highlight typical behaviors learned through classical conditioning.

Operant conditioning, as presented by Skinner, is altering behavior through the use of reinforcements. Skinner believed behaviors that were reinforced would be repeated and those that were not reinforced would die out ("B.F. Skinner," 2015; Iverson, 1992; Morsello, 2010; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). The participants in this study expressed a reinforced expectation for achieving educational success. Many of the participants reported that they were required to

complete homework before being allowed to participate in recreational activities, disciplined at home for poor behavior at school, and communicated with on a regular basis about the importance of school by their parent. Parents constantly reinforced education as an important part of the child's life. As participants grew older, they knew and understood that education was important due to the continual reinforcement.

In Bandura's social cognitive theory, Bandura believes humans have the ability to control their own behavior. Bandura believes anyone can adopt attitudes and behaviors of individuals for which they are able to relate. His research suggests that children use people they see as models and will imitate those most like themselves (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Bandura also suggests that children will learn to imitate behavior based on the punishment or reward for such behavior and make decisions based on previous incidents as to whether the punishment or reward is worth the behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Strangor & Walinga, 2014). These research findings demonstrate Bandura's theory. Specifically, students living in a single parent home that become successful often gravitate towards a secondary positive influence outside of the home. The influence outside of the home shares a genuine concern and offers advice to the student. This secondary influence often becomes a role model for the student. Participants of this research most often found the positive influence at school while others utilized a family member.

This research reinforced Skinner's operant conditioning and Bandura's social cognitive theory as important factors in a child's academic success. Participants stated their parents had rules for completing schoolwork, making good grades, and performing household chores or they would receive consequences. Skinner called these consequences reinforcers and believed they were essential in the social development of a child (Iverson, 1992). Bandura noted in his social cognitive theory that children will often find and mimic an individual in which they can relate to

or have a common interest with (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Participants also noted a second individual as a positive influence that was most often a teacher, coach, or family member in which the participant could relate.

Implication of Results for Educators

In a society where almost 55% of children have lived with a single parent by the age of fifteen ("State of the Family," n.d.), it has become necessary for educators to understand how living with a single parent may affect a child's education. To maximize a student's educational potential, educators must understand the familial influences that affect a child's education. This study helps identify key influences inside and outside of the home that have the most positive effect on a child's education.

Like parents, educators need to set high expectations for all of their students. Expectations for a school, classroom, and students should be easily understood and universal throughout the school. A school leader should continually remind the staff of the expectations that have been set for the students. Likewise, a teacher needs to remind their students of classroom expectations. Rules, discipline, classroom instruction, the grading system, building maintenance, and other aspects within the school should reflect the expectations that have been set for the students. These expectations should be communicated and demonstrated by the school staff on a regular basis.

Educators need to communicate with their students about activities outside the classroom. Communication with the students demonstrate that the educator has a real interest in the student as a person. Educators should attend and discuss the students' extracurricular activities with them. Communication with students should also include the students' future goals and aspirations. Creating an open dialogue with a student about topics outside the classroom creates

a trust and positive rapport with the student. When the student needs assistance with personal needs, the student may be more likely to seek help from the educator if there is a positive rapport with that individual. This positive relationship with the educator may take the place of the second parent, helping to fill the gap the single parent may be incapable of filling.

Educators should not underestimate their influence on students. As this research shows, numerous individuals within a school have the ability to influence a student. Some students cited a coach, while others credited a teacher or guidance counselor as a major secondary influence outside of the home. These individuals were credited with helping students with homework, self-discipline, general advice, and college registration. Most educators know they have the ability to influence a child's knowledge within the classroom, but many lose sight of their influence over attitudes and social behavior. Helping students outside of the classroom or school setting may help fill a gap left due to living with a single parent.

Educators also need to be aware of the influence extracurricular activities may have on a child's education. Even though this research does not draw a direct cause and effect relationship between extracurricular activities and a student's educational success, there is definitely a link between the two. The 12 participants in this study participated in one or more extracurricular activities during high school. Each of the 12 participants self-reported a 3.0 GPA in high school and continued their education on to college. Educators should use their ability to influence and promote student participation in the fine arts, sports, and clubs.

Educators must also realize that their influence and relationship with students has a far-reaching impact, especially with students living with a single parent. Setting high expectations at school and in the classroom demonstrates to the student the importance of education. Consistently demonstrating and communicating educational expectations lets the students know

education is important. Part of the expectations should also include encouraging and supporting the student's extracurricular participation, demonstrating an interest in the student beyond the classroom.

Recommendations for Future Research

I was unable to locate qualitative studies centered on educationally successful students from single parent families. The majority of research in this area is quantitative. Quantitative studies strongly suggest that children from single parent families are less likely to obtain a high school diploma or college degree than a child from a two parent family. Other quantitative studies suggest that various forms of parental involvement improve a child's chances for educational success. While this study sought to gain insight into the student's perspective on the factors they felt helped them become educationally successful, further research in this area is needed. The following is a list of ideas for future research that became apparent during this study.

1) This study was conducted as a phenomenological study of educationally successful students living with a single parent. One of the limitations to this study was the limited amount of participants available. This study would benefit from additional participants. Replicating this study utilizing a large number of participants would enhance the credibility of this research.

2) Another limitation of this research was that the participants were from a small geographical region in Southern Illinois. Widening the geographical region of participants would help to determine if the results of this study are indicative of a particular region or common to all participants living with a single parent.

3) This qualitative study supports recent quantitative studies citing parental expectations

as the number one factor affecting a child's education. More studies are needed looking specifically into parental expectations and how they affect a child's education. Qualitative and quantitative studies should be used to dissect specific ways in which parental expectations are expressed that positively affect a child's education.

4) Since the results of this study and other recent quantitative studies indicate parental expectations as the leading parental involvement indicator of a student's educational success, additional studies researching how a teacher, coach, or administrator's expectations affect a student's education should be conducted. If parental expectations are the leading force from home behind a student's success, then it should be reasonable to assume that a teacher, coach, or administrator's expectations would have a similar effect on students at school.

5) Additional research needs to be conducted to study the link between extracurricular participation in school activities and educational success of students from single parent families. All 12 of the participants acknowledged being involved in some form of extracurricular activity during their high school career. The only link suggested in this research from some of the participants was that a coach or sponsor positively influenced them. Other participants did not suggest any link between extracurricular participation in their educational success.

6) All of the participants acknowledged discussing school or college at home. While the length and types of conversations varied for each participant, each acknowledged that the parent generally initiated school conversations. Some of the reported conversations were clear examples of the parent's expectations. Other conversations were vague. Additional research needs to be conducted analyzing a parent and child's conversations regarding education. Through additional research, parents may be given topics or methods of reinforcing the importance of education through conversations at home.

While this study demonstrates the importance of parental expectations, communication at home, and participation in extracurricular activities at school, additional research is needed to narrow down specific elements of each that improves the chances of educational success for a child living with a single parent. Individuals that understand these key influences can help train parents and teachers to exemplify a positive influence on a child's education.

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Appendix A: Research Questions

Research sub questions

Family Education

What is the highest level of education of both parents?

What is the highest level of education of the parent you lived with?

Describe any advantages or disadvantages you may have experienced in your education due to living with a single parent.

What role do you feel your parent played in your education?
What are some ways in which your parent provided support for your education (time, money, etc.)?

What other individuals have affected your education (other parent, grandparent, teacher, coach, pastor, other family member, or someone else)?

Family Income

Would you consider your family income low, middle or high-income level?

Did your family own or rent the place you lived in?

Did you receive free/reduced lunches in high school?

Did you qualify for financial aid, other than student loans, in college?

Home Environment

Describe your home environment growing up.

Describe any family routines or traditions that may have occurred daily, monthly, or yearly.

Describe any family transitions that took place during your childhood and how they may have affected your education for the positive or negative.

Would you describe your home as stable or volatile? Explain.

Describe any parental responsibilities you may have assumed at home due to living with a single parent (babysitting siblings, getting siblings ready for school, providing meals at home, work, etc.).

Was there a major event (death of a family member, accident, divorce, catastrophic event, movie, motivational speaker, or a poem.) that helped formed your perception of education? If so, describe the event.

Mobility

What were some reasons for your residential move (employment, family changes, community, neighborhood, housing, etc.)?

What were some of the reasons for changing schools (changed residents, discipline, poor school, bullying, etc.)?

Describe any effect that residential or school change had on your education.

Parenting Styles

Give an overall synopsis of your parent's parenting style.

Best describe your parent's rules and consequences at home. Give examples.

Were you allowed to make decisions for yourself concerning courses in high school, where to attend college, or other age appropriate decisions?

How would you describe your parent's support for you in extracurricular activities at school or other activities outside of school?

Parent Involvement

How would you describe your parent's involvement in your education?

How would you describe your parent's communication with the school, teachers, and administrators?

Describe the amount of time per week you and your parent discussed school (homework, teachers, activities, attendance, discipline, etc.).

Did you receive consequences from your parent for poor grades on your report card, a test, homework, or for poor behavior at school? If so, can you describe the types of consequences?

Did your parent talk about college or post-secondary education? If so, how often and describe the conversations.

What were your parent's expectation of your education? How was this demonstrated or expressed?

Appendix B: Participant Questionnaire

Basic information

1) How old are you?

2) Are you male or female?

3) What type of post-secondary school do or did you attend (trade school, college, or university)?

4) What are your plans after college? If you have already graduated, are you employed? If, so where and for how long?

5) With whom (parent/guardian) did you live while in high school?

6) Did another adult, besides your parent, live with you while you were in grade school or high school? If so, what was their relationship to you and for how long?

7) How many times during your childhood did you change residence (address)?

8) How long did you live at the address in which you attended high school?

9) How many times during your childhood did you change school districts, excluding grade school to high school?

10) What was your cumulative GPA or average grade per class in high school? In college?

11) Which of the following best describes your parent's parenting style?
    a. **Authoritarian** - child has very little say in their own life; enforce strict and harsh discipline immediately following the child's poor behavior or non-compliance
    b. **Authoritative** - allow some input from the child in decisions related to the child; often set rules and parameters for their children
    c. **Permissive** - allow their kids to make most of their own decisions and often give in to the child's desires
    d. **Neglectful** - often nonexistent or has very little communication with the child

Appendix C: Participant Agreement Form

Participation in a Research Study
McKendree University

A Single Parent's Impact on Educationally Successful Students

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Reid Shipley. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to find the people, events, and other factors that guided a student from a single parent family to academic success, as perceived by the student.

Your participation is strictly voluntary and you can stop the interview at any time. The interview will be confidential. The information obtained in the interview will remain confidential throughout the study and only known between the interviewee and the interviewer.

The length of the interview will be approximately thirty minutes to one hour depending on the length of the interviewee's answers and possible follow up questions.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known physical risk factors with this interview or research. The interview will be conducted in a location and facility of the participant's choice. The questions will focus on the positive skills and influences that helped the interviewee become a successful high school student. The only potential risk factor would be if the participant would recall a bad memory from his/her childhood that could potentially affect the student's emotional or social well-being.

Potential benefits

There are no known direct benefits for the participant that would result from the individual's participation in this research. The benefits of the research will potentially help other children from single parent homes that may not have had the benefit of positive influences in their lives. The research will help school leaders and educators better understand the positive skills and influences a child from a single parent home needs to be a successful student. As a result, educators can begin to practice the skills that have the most positive impact on children from single parent homes. Schools will also be able to design social programs that meet the needs of students living with a single parent and the parent.

Protection of confidentiality

I will do everything within my power to maintain the confidentiality of the participant. The participant's real name will never be associated with this research. The participant's responses will not be associated with the participant's name. All interviewees will be given false names within the research to disguise their identities.

The interview will be audio and visually recorded for clarification and accuracy. The audiovisual recording will be secured and locked in a location known only to me. I will be the only person to review and listen to the audiovisual recordings. The audiovisual recording will be transcribed to print without the association of the student's name. The audiovisual recordings will immediately be destroyed after completion of the dissertation.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this study is 100% voluntary. At any time before, during, or after the interview you choose to withdraw from the research, you may do so. If you decide at any time during the interview to stop the interview, your request will be granted. After the interview, if you request to have your responses removed from the research, your responses will immediately be pulled from the research and not used in the final project.

Each participant will be offered a chance to read and review the dissertation before the final submission. If the participant chooses to have his/her data removed from the dissertation before the final submission, for any reason, I will pull the participant's data from the research before the final submission.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Reid Shipley at 618-533-2569 or 618-322-7466. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Mckendree University Institutional Review Board at IRB@mckendree.edu.

Consent

I have read this agreement form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature_____ Date: _____

A copy of this agreement form should be given to you.

Appendix D: Debriefing Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to find the people, events, and other factors that guided a student from a single parent family to academic success, as perceived by the student. Participants will be informed of the general purpose of the study. In an attempt to limit predetermined answers by the participants, specific questions and sub questions will not be disclosed to the participants until the time of the interview. To ensure the answers and data of the study are accurate, the interviews will be video and audio recorded. If a participant chooses to have his/her data removed from the dissertation before the final submission, for any reason, I will pull the participant's data from the research. If you have any questions or would like to receive a final copy of the dissertation, please feel free to contact Reid Shipley at rshipley@centraliahs.org. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix E: Unused Data

Name		Parental Education		Mobility			
		Mom's Education Level	**Dad's Education Level**	**Number or Residential Moves**	**Reason for Residential Moves**	**Number of School Moves**	**Reason for School Moves**
Participant 1		Community College Associates Degree	GED HS dropout	8	usually financial	3	Due to residential moves
Participant 2		Bachelor's Degree	High School Graduate	0	N/A	0 outside normal progression	N/A
Participant 3		High School Graduate	High School Graduate	0	N/A	0 outside normal progression	N/A
Participant 4		Mom dropped out in 10th grade	Dad never went to HS	14	Financial, tear up the place or couldn't pay rent	4	Mom moved with new boyfriend or get kicked out of current location
Participant 5		Mom HS Graduate	Dad didn't finish community college	0	N/A	0	N/A
Participant 6		Mom- Associates Degree	Dad - Bachelor's Degree (later in life)	4	Family disruptions	4	Residential moves
Participant 7		Mom - Bachelor's & Master's Degree	Dad - GED	0	N/A	0	N/A

Name		**Parental Education**		**Mobility**			
		Mom's Education Level	**Dad's Education Level**	**Number or Residential Moves**	**Reason for Residential Moves**	**Number of School Moves**	**Reason for School Moves**
Participant 8		Community College Associates Degree	GED HS dropout	8	Financial	5	Due to residential moves
Participant 9		Mom - High School Graduate	Dad - HS dropout	16	Financial; Running from threats to parents and family	11	Due to residential moves
Participant 10		Mom - 2 years of college no degree	Dad - 1 year of college no degree	3	Family disruptions	7	Family transitions
Participant 11		Never finished high school	Never finished high school	3	Family disruptions (divorce) and lack of housing	0	N/A
Participant 12		Mom - High School Graduate	Dad - High School Graduate	1	Divorce	0	N/A

Name		**Home Environment**				
		Stable or Volatile	**Reason for Single Parent**	**Home Responsibilities**	**Total Number of Family Transitions**	**Type of Transitions**
Participant 1		Volatile, lots of screaming and yelling between mom and siblings	Divorced	clean own room, laundry, work for food	4	Dad moved out, moved in with grandma, moved out of grandmas apartment, dad moved in and back out again, moms girlfriend moved in
Participant 2		Fairly stable with rules	Divorced	laundry, dishes, take the dogs out, and mow	1	Parents divorced and dad moved out.
Participant 3		Fairly stable until mom moved out during 6th grade	Divorced; mom moved out of the house	Laundry, dishes, clean the house, fix own meals, and mow	2	Mom moved out of the house; dad moved out of the house during junior year of high school; left on her own
Participant 4		Not stable when younger; people in and out of the house constantly	Never married until recently	By 4th or 5th grade I was taking care of my siblings; I would get them ready for school and help with everything; Felt like I was their mom	3	Lived with grandma for 1 year; moved in with mom's boyfriend out of state for three months; lived with a friend for a few months
Participant 5		Stable. Lived in very small condo. My mom’s always like on top of my head unless I go in my room.	Divorce	None	2	Dad moved out; temporarily lived with grandma
Participant 6		A little of both until mom & dad separated; fairly stable until mom's boyfriend moved in with us, then became somewhat unstable	Divorce	Mom had a schedule for dishes, cleaning, laundry, etc. After the two youngest sisters were born, we had to babysit and take care of them too.	3	Divorce, dad moved out; Mom's boyfriend moved in the home for 3 years and then moved out

Name		**Home Environment**				
		Stable or Volatile	**Reason for Single Parent**	**Home Responsibilities**	**Total Number of Family Transitions**	**Type of Transitions**
Participant 7		Fairly stable. Dad moved out around 3rd grade. Other than that, fairly stable.	Divorce	Had to make bed every day. In the summer mom would leave lists of chores. If the chores weren't finished you couldn't go outside or play.	1	Dad moved out of the home.
Participant 8		Mixed depending on the timing; mostly volatile due to financial issues.	Divorce	Did cleaning, cooking, and feeding the dog. Make sure older brother was awake for school.	Not sure/several	Dad moved in and out a few times; grandma moved in and out once
Participant 9		Volatile: I remember as a kid being afraid. My dad was very violent person. He was in prison for 3 or 4 years because he beat her (previous girlfriend).	Divorce	My parents taught my sister and I from an early age that as soon as you're able to do chores and things like that, you have to pay your dues. I never once saw my mom or dad pick up the vacuum or do dishes	Not sure	Dad moved out and in a few times; eventually moved in with grandparents
Participant 10		Both stable and volatile. Stable after the divorce around 1st grade. Mostly volatile during high school when dad's girlfriend moved in.	Divorce	Mow, clean, laundry, and get myself up for school. Mostly on my own from 5th grade through high school. Had to do everything including getting younger sister.	3	Mom moved out; dad's girlfriend moved in the house; dad's girlfriend moved out of the house
Participant 11		I think my home was stable. I could go there sleep take a shower. There is always food snacks.	Divorce	None. I was responsible for taking care of my own stuff. Very rarely did I have time to do laundry. I spent a decent amount of money on fast food.	3	Dad moved out after divorce; Dad moved in with grandma; I moved in with dad and grandma: dad got a house then dad's girlfriend moved in
Participant 12		Stable	Divorce	Nothing out of the ordinary. Everyone helped clean on Sundays	2	Mom remarried a year after divorce: Dad remarried later

Name		**Parenting Style**	
		Parenting Style	**Rules at Home**
Participant 1		Permissive	None; go to school and check in with mom to make sure I was OK.
Participant 2		Authoritative	Had to ask permission to leave the house. Consequences for bad grades. Take phone, TV, or games away.
Participant 3		Neglectful	None; I was on my own to make all of my own decisions
Participant 4		Permissive	Never had many rules; Curfew was midnight when I was 16; Only major rule was that mom didn't want me to drink because my family is full of addicts
Participant 5		Authoritarian	She was so on top of me. All my money my mom made me leave on the kitchen table. If I was going somewhere and took money, she would see how much I was taking and bring a receipt back home.
Participant 6		Authoritative	Very strict rules. Had to complete homework and chores before playing or going to friend's house. Consequences were spankings and groundings for not following rules
Participant 7		Authoritative	It was cause and effect, "if you don't do this, you can't do that." If you don't get the chores done you can't go outside or play video games
Participant 8		Authoritative	No rules when I got older (HS). Very strict when younger (Jr. high). Grounded for breaking rules.
Participant 9		Neglectful	I can basically do whatever I wanted. The only thing my sister and I was expected was to not run our mouth to counselors and things like that. They put it as "you get us in trouble, you'll be in trouble."
Participant 10		Authoritative	Whipped/spanked when young for bad behavior. Had curfew in jr. high and HS. Grounded for coming home late, poor school work, etc.
Participant 11		Permissive	At that time, my brothers were older, so they would gain most of the consequences. Sometimes it was a belt or whatever, which I never received any spankings. The consequence was more of him saying something about it in a joking manner.
Participant 12		Authoritative	My mom is pretty laid-back. My mom was pretty carefree. My stepdad was very strict. Never had any friends over at all. You can never leave the yard. My dad was one of those, do what I say. My dad never grounded me until I was in high school. I think there was a certain level of mutual respect their.

Appendix F: CITI Training

CITI PROGRAM

Completion 08No-
Expiration 07No-
Record 212842

This is to certify

Michael

Has completed the following CITI Program

Human Subjects Research
Education
1 - Basic

(Curriculum)
(Course Learner)
(Stage)

Not valid for renewal of through CME. Do not use TransCelerate mutual (see Completion

Under requirements set

McKendree

CITI

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wf948b2e0-cf1b-4285-a3bd-a348b36485c4-

Appendix G: IRB Approval

Request for:

Expedited IRB Review

Purpose of Research:

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to find the people, events, and other factors that guided a student at from a single parent family to academic success, as perceived by the student. The following questions will be the leading question of this study:

1) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about the influences inside the home that led to their educational success?

2) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about influences outside of the home that led to their educational success?

3) What are the beliefs of educationally successful students from single parent families about events that led to their educational success?

Describe the participants in this study:

The participants in this study will be high school graduates between the ages of 18–25 that are currently enrolled or have graduated from a secondary institution (community college, university, or trade school). The participants must have lived with a single parent from middle school through high school. Ten to fifteen participants will be selected. The reason for living with a single parent (child out of wedlock, divorce, or death of a parent) is not significant to this study. A questionnaire was used to gather demographic information of thee participant (Appendix B).

Methodology

This study will be conducted with a phenomenological approach**.** Participants will be interviewed in a location of his/her choice. The interviews will be audio and visually recorded for clarification and accuracy. Each interview will last approximately thirty minutes to one hour depending on the length of the participant's answers and follow-up questions.

Please describe the measures used in the study

Each participant will be given a brief questionnaire (Appendix B) before the interview begins. The questionnaire will last basic demographic questions to assure the candidate meets the qualifications for the study. The majority of the study will be conducted as a phenomenological study. The participants will be asked multiple questions (Appendix A) in a one-on-one interview.

Risks/Benefits to participants

There are no known physical risk factors with this interview or research. The interview will be conducted in a location and facility of the participant's choice. The questions will focus on the positive skills and influences that helped the interviewee become a successful high school student. The only potential risk factor would be if the participant would recall a bad memory from his/her childhood that could potentially affect the student's emotional or social well-being.

There are no known direct benefits for the participant that would result from the individual's participation in this research. The benefits of the research will potentially help other children from single parent homes that may not have had the benefit of positive influences in their lives. The research will help school leaders and educators better understand the positive skills and influences a child from a single parent home needs to be a successful student. As a result, educators can begin to practice the skills that have the most positive impact on children from single parent homes. Schools will also be able to design social programs that meet the needs of students living with a single parent and the parent.

What will be done to reduce the risk to the participants and maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the data?

I will do everything within my power to maintain the confidentiality of the participant. The participant's real name will never be associated with this research. The participant's responses will not be associated with the participant's name. All interviewees will be given false names within the research to disguise their identities. The interview will be audio and visually recorded for clarification and accuracy. The audiovisual recording will be secured and locked in a location known only to me. I will be the only person to review and listen to the audiovisual recordings. The audiovisual recordings will be transcribed to print without the association of the participant's name. The audiovisual recordings will immediately be destroyed after completion of this dissertation.

How will you gather informed consent of the participants?

Participants will be asked to sign the Participant Agreement Form (Appendix C) after I has determined the candidate meets the criteria to be a participant and has agreed to participate in this study. I will maintain a copy of the signed agreement throughout the duration of this study.

How will participants be debriefed?

Participants will be debriefed after the interview is complete. They will be given the opportunity to withdraw their interview from this research at any time by contacting me. The participants will be given a copy of the Debriefing Statement (Appendix D) with my contact information should they have questions or wish to withdraw their interview from the research.