

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF PARENTING PRACTICES PERCEIVED TO HAVE
FOSTERED ACADEMIC SUCCESS BY GRADUATES OF MASTERS AND DOCTORAL
PROGRAMS

by
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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor in Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the parenting practices experienced by graduates of masters and doctoral programs identified as having fostered their academic success. The research explores the following questions: How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success; in what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success; how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success; and which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success? A snowball sampling of twelve, 24-31 year old graduates of masters and doctoral programs were interviewed and participated in a focus group to describe the parenting practices they perceived to have fostered their academic success. Data was analyzed for significant statements and coded to identify recurring themes. The guiding theories for this study were Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory, Bandura's (1977) observational learning theory, and the biblical model of parenting. Findings support these theories and confirm existing studies on parental involvement and achievement. *Parent practices, parent motivators, parent-child interaction, and parent values* were themes that emerged from the data, revealing the significance of reading, faith, parent-child interaction, and the parents' view of education. Recommendations for future research include replicating this study with a more diverse group of participants and examining the role faith plays in family culture.

Keywords: parental involvement, parenting practices, academic success, lifelong learners, parent-child interaction, family culture, achievement motivation

Dedication

I dedicate this work to parents—those individuals, who day in and day out, take on the responsibility and the privilege of shaping the heart of a child and preparing them to lead the next generation. It is my prayer that parents are encouraged and equipped to model for their children Christ-like character, faith, and a love for reading and learning—to help children better understand and revere God.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my dear children, whose example of academic diligence caused me to ponder how their robust framework of knowledge was constructed, and to question parenting practices that contributed to their broad and integrated understanding of the world. For their many hours of discussing the issues reported in the study and for their feedback, I am grateful. Second, I want to thank my husband for his willingness to adjust schedules and sacrifice vacations during this journey, and for his never ending support and encouragement. And most importantly, I am grateful to God for bending my heart toward Him and for giving me a love for children and for education, the impetus for this study.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Meta-analysis of the research has shown that a significant relationship exists between parental involvement and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2012). The problem that exists in the literature regarding parental involvement and academic achievement is the breadth of understanding the parenting practices that fostered academic success. This study examines parenting practices perceived to have fostered academic success by graduates of masters and doctorate programs. Chapter One provides background information on parental involvement, the purpose and significance of this study, the questions that guided the research, the research plan, and delimitations. Examining different types of parental involvement or parenting practices may help to identify behaviors that can help educators and parents better understand ways to motivate and increase student success.

Background

The issue of parental involvement and academic achievement is one that affects everyone in one way or another. The Bible offers the historical foundation for the issue of parental involvement. God established the family unit and gave the responsibility of training children to the parents (Proverbs 22:6, New International Version). For hundreds of years training has been done primarily in the home with parents and elders taking responsibility for training children (Hill, 1996). Few children received a formal education outside the home as children in developed countries experience today (Hill, 1996). Over time young men were trained by rabbis or priests while girls were trained at home (Hill, 1996). “The temple and palace schools were designed to produce literate, informed, and capable religious and sociopolitical leaders and administrators” (Hill, p. 2). Greene (2003), states that the family is the God-centered learning

center: “That is where [children] are to learn, from the example and instruction of their parents” (Kindle Edition). Education has its roots in the home and in the church (Hill, 1996), and studies confirm that parental involvement in the education process is important for student success (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Stacer & Perucci, 2013).

The responsibility and task of educating children involves developing the mind and character of a child. Parents are charged by God to fulfill the responsibility of training their children (Schultz, 2010). According to Deuteronomy 6, parental training of children takes place throughout the day in all activities of life requiring that the parent be actively involved in the learning process at home and at school. Parents are to diligently teach the commands of God to their children; parents are instructed to “talk with them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy. 6:8, New American Standard). This means that parents must interact with their children, engage their children, and instruct their children at all times (Schultz, 2010).

In reviewing the history of parental involvement there are several learning theories developed over the years that address how children learn and how parents might play a part in child development. Sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and observational learning theory (Bandura, 1977) provide a theoretical framework for understanding how parental practices and parental influences are significant to the development of learning (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

Research spanning decades has shown that parent involvement has a positive effect on student achievement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Griffith, 1996; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). However, there are several limitations to the

research which has been conducted on the effects of parental involvement and student achievement. These limitations include the predominate use of quantitative methods to examine parental involvement, reporting of involvement by parents, and survey tools that are limited in scope-reporting on involvement specific to school tasks both at school and in the home. Few tools or methods of research explore parent practices in the home that may influence academic achievement (Gordon & Cui, 2012). Epstein (2009) in studying parental involvement for example, classified parent involvement in the following categories: parenting skills to support children as students, parent-school communications, parent-school volunteer work, school related learning in the home, parent involvement in school decision making, and collaborating with the school community. Epstein's (2007) model helps to define parental involvement as it relates to school activities.

More recently research has begun to look at more specific parenting practices that influence achievement as well as the perception principals, teachers and students have about parental involvement (Gordon & Seashore-Louis, 2009). Many studies recommend further research on the issue of parental involvement and student achievement viewed from the child's perspective and examination of more subtle parenting practices that cover a broader scope of involvement (Banerjee, Harrell & Johnson, 2011; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Hayes, 2011; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Jeynes, 2010; Midraj & Midraj, 2011; Van Voorhis, 2011).

Situation to Self

Spending several years in a single parent home and growing up with a mother involved in the PTA but who functionally was not involved with the learning process at home, left me as a child, without a framework of general knowledge which limited my ability to connect information in meaningful ways. I attribute this in part to a lack of engagement or interaction

with my parents. Although they were good parents, education was viewed as something that the school was responsible for providing and my parents assumed the good grades I received by working hard, reflected my understanding. Not wanting this to be the experience of my own children I began homeschooling them in the early elementary years. This model of education afforded the opportunity for my children to have constant interaction with a parent with respect to what they were learning. The process provided relevant interaction, hands-on learning, and self-directed study that resulted in high standardized test scores, high college GPA's, early entrance into a competitive graduate programs, and a framework of knowledge to build upon.

The epistemological assumption behind the educational philosophy I espouse is that knowledge is acquired through interaction and parents have the ability and opportunity to impart knowledge through modeling, interaction, and direct instruction (Bandura, 1977). Home also provides an ideal place for constructivist learning to occur through the interaction with parents. Functioning within a family, children gain knowledge and understanding from real life experience that provides opportunities for problem solving, adaptive learning, and the integration of new and prior knowledge (Bandura, 1977) if the parent engages the child in critical thinking skills, reflection, analysis, and synthesis to find meaning in the learned experiences. As a school leader of a University-Model® school that emphasizes parental involvement, I have witnessed various levels of parental involvement and how that involvement influences the student's academic performance.

As a Christian educator, I strongly believe that God has given parents the responsibility to educate their children and to train them in the "way they should go" (Proverbs 22:6). Having the privilege of homeschooling my children who were successful in their academic growth, I have experienced first-hand the influence of parenting practices. Observing various parenting

styles and practices over the years as an educational leader, and witnessing the effect of parental training or lack thereof, I was interested in studying the influence of specific parenting practices on student achievement. The motivation for this research was to better understand those parenting practices described by young adults that they perceive to have fostered an academic understanding and to have helped them, as students, synthesize information in meaningful ways that have allowed them to be successful academically.

Problem Statement

Research on parental involvement has been primarily quantitative and limited to practices and involvement related to school and teacher based activities and home-based school initiated activities reported by teachers and parents (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Hayes, 2011; Ishak, Fin Low & Li Lau, 2012; Jeynes, 2011). The problem is a lack of understanding about how parenting practices unrelated to school initiated activities are perceived to impact a student's academic success. The focus of this research was to describe specific parenting practices identified by 24-32 year old graduates of masters and doctoral programs perceived to have fostered their academic success.

More recent research suggests exploring more subtle aspects of parental involvement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Jeynes, 2012). Baharudin, Hong, Lim, and Zulkefly, (2010) refer to "parenting quality" but do not offer a significant description of those traits perceived by children to foster academic success. Research consistently reports that the authoritative style of parenting has a more positive relationship to student achievement (Ishak et al., 2012; Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Kordi & Baharudin, 2010); however, these studies do not address parenting practices and influences unrelated to school based activities that adult children view as influential in fostering their academic success. Joshi and Acharya (2013) reported that parenting

practices and a nurturing home environment are positively related to a student's motivation to achievement but did not report on specific practices. This research explored in more depth the subtle and specific aspects of parenting practices in the home environment described by graduates of masters and doctoral programs to expand the understanding of parental involvement and provide new information regarding home based practices that influence academic success. The problem is a lack of understanding about how parenting practices unrelated to school initiated activities are perceived to impact a student's academic success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the parenting practices experienced by graduates of masters and doctoral programs identified as having fostered their academic success. Participants were young adults ages 24-31 who have graduated from masters and doctoral programs. Interviews were conducted with 12 participants and two focus groups were conducted with nine of those individuals.

Children are highly influenced by their parents' beliefs, behaviors, and child rearing practices (Chabra & Kumari, 2011). What specific parent behaviors or practices foster academic success? Parenting practices were generally defined as those activities and behaviors parents regularly practiced that engaged their children and or instill values perceived by participants to have impacted their academic success. Parenting practices include parent-child interaction, routine family practices, and behaviors associated with their beliefs.

Student success can be defined in many ways. Students, parents, and educators have defined academic success by measuring outcomes or by evaluating the fulfillment of reaching stated goals. Success may be measured by student satisfaction or happiness, by readiness for the world, by graduation rate, or standardized test results (Winton, 2013). Overall, the definition of

success comes down to one's belief about education and its purpose (Winston, 2013). Hasan and Khalid, (2012) used grade point average (GPA) to differentiate high and low achievers to learn more about achievement motivation. Students with a GPA of 3.2 or above were designated as high achievers and those with a GPA of 2.2 or below were identified as low achievers (Hasan & Khalid, 2012). Miller, Lambert and Speirs Neumeister (2012) also used GPA and standardized test scores to identify "high ability" and high achieving college students for their study on parenting styles and creativity.

For the purpose of this study academic success was defined as the cognitive abilities needed for a student to have earned a bachelor's degree, been accepted and graduated from a regionally accredited masters program by age 22-23 or a doctoral program by age 26-32 with a GPA of 3.0 or higher. The assumptions were as follows: the age parameters show the student was motivated to achieve and possessed the ability to be accepted into an accredited graduate program. The GPA showed a reasonable level of achievement during the student's academic process with ten participants earning a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Academic success was also defined by participants' motivation and determination in completing a graduate program at an age that indicated continuous enrollment and active pursuit of higher education.

In order to reflect on parent practices that promoted and motivated learning, these assumptions provided a shared foundation for describing the phenomenon. The assumptions were not intended to be used to define academic success in a broader context. It is reasonable to assume that if these constructs were met that these graduates possessed a high level of cognitive ability and experienced academic success.

Parenting practices, for the purpose of this study, were defined as the parent behaviors and routine activities that took place in the home in the context of the family that were described

by young adults to have fostered their academic success. Many practices that have been studied related to how parents are involved in school activities and academic assignments directed by the school (Jeynes, 2011; Midraj & Midraj, 2011). Less is known about the way parents foster academic development based on their behaviors and child rearing practices. What type of behavior promotes or motivates learning? How does the family spend their vacation? What is the conversation at the dinner table? These were questions explored here.

The theories that guided this research were the sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978), the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), observational learning theory (Bandura, 1977), and the biblical model for parenting. Each of these theories espouses learning through observation and modeling. Parents are observed by their children and model behaviors, attitudes, and values to their children.

Significance of the Study

Parental involvement in a child's education is more than attending parent meetings, volunteering in the classroom and helping with homework. Parents have the God-given responsibility and opportunity to be the most influential person in a child's life and as such, play a significant role in student training and motivation (Schultz, 2010). The biblical model for parenting is an encompassing task that requires instruction with love and discipline. When the parent makes a decision to enroll his or her child in a school, the student's education becomes a shared responsibility (Schultz, 2010).

Although studies have shown parental involvement to have a positive effect on a student's academic success, many of these studies focus on parental involvement in the school environment or on specific involvement related to school activities (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Jeynes, 2011). Others studies examine the effect of the parents' education

(Domina, & Roksa, 2012) or the parents' expectations (Gordon, & Cui, 2012; Wang, 2015). Less is known about the perceived outcome of specific parenting practices in the home and parental training on children's academic performance. The substantive findings of this study can extend the literature with regards to parental practices in the home perceived to have fostered student achievement (Jeynes, 2011).

The theoretical significance of this study has to do with the ability to use research findings to further help parents, teachers, and school leaders better understand the parenting practices that may positively influence academic success. More is known about parental involvement and achievement related to involvement in the school setting (attending school meetings, communicating with the school, and volunteering in the classroom) and home-based school initiated activities (helping with homework) than parent activities and behaviors that occur in the home environment that may foster academic success (Walker et al., 2010).

Bandura (1997) asserts that learning takes place through observation and modeling. Parents are the first and most important models in a child's life. Parents often look to the school to educate their children and schools must have parent cooperation to be effective. Understanding and viewing education as a partnership between the parent and the school is needed in order to maximize the effects of parental influence in education (Schultz, 2010). Information gleaned from this study may assist educators and parents alike. School leaders must develop and implement strategies that will educate and equip parents to motivate and encourage learning in both the home and school environments. In addition, administrators and teachers may learn strategies for engagement that may be beneficial in the classroom.

Research provides evidence that parenting practices, styles, and beliefs about education play an important role in student achievement making this a critical issue in education (Jeynes,

2012). As school leaders learn more specific parenting practices that influence academic success, administrators and community leaders can provide parents with education workshops, classes and written material to help children achieve at higher levels. Advancing the research also provides parents with the information needed to be more proactive in parenting and strategies for helping to build a framework of knowledge for their children that will foster academic success.

Research Questions

In examining parental practices that foster academic success described by graduates of masters and doctoral programs, four questions guided the research. The questions were as follows:

RQ1 How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success?

It was the researcher's belief that interviewing graduates of masters and doctoral programs and having them participate in a focus group would provide a more in-depth view of parenting practices than the perception of adolescent and high school students using survey tools. The decision to use young professionals was based on the assumption that young graduate students have achieved academic success by qualifying for and completing graduate programs early in their career (Scepansky & Bjornsen, 2003).

RQ2 In what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success?

Joshi and Acharya (2013) provide a foundation for asking about achievement motivation. As the most significant agent in providing achievement motivation, the family environment is important to better understand (Joshi & Acharya, 2013). Permissiveness, nurturance,

protectiveness, control, and punishment are parent behaviors or practices that have been examined in relationship to achievement motivation and student outcomes (Joshi & Acharya, 2013). Learning about specific parenting practices from participants may help to better understand how students are motivated to achieve.

RQ3 How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success?

Parent-child interaction is closely related to parenting styles. The literature surrounding parental involvement and academic achievement examines authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and dismissive parenting (Cherry, 2014; Ishak et al., 2012; Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Kordi & Baharudin, 2010; Parsasirat, Montazeri, Yusoff, Subhi & Nen, 2013; Spera, 2005). Chabra and Kumari (2011), report the significance of parental encouragement as a form of parent-child interaction, providing a basis for further study in the area of parent-child interaction and academic motivation.

RQ4 Which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success?

Parent attitudes or expectations for academic achievement have been shown to affect student outcomes. A positive relationship exists between high educational expectations and high achievement (Wang, 2015). Parents' education can reveal something about their attitude toward education and their interest in being involved in the learning process of their children (Klemencic, Mirazchiyski, & Sandoval-Hernandez, 2014; Wang, 2015).

Research Plan

This hermeneutic phenomenological study sought to describe the phenomenon of parenting practices as experienced by graduates of masters and doctoral programs. This

qualitative study with twelve individuals, 24-31 years old, describes the parenting practices they have experienced and believe to have fostered academic success and professional pursuits. Qualitative analysis allowed for a more thorough examination of the perceived influence of parenting practices in the home on children's achievement (Creswell, 2013). After completing a screening survey, participants in this qualitative study were interviewed and participated in a focus group to gather in-depth descriptions of parenting practices perceived to have fostered academic success. Data was analyzed to describe their common experience (Creswell, 2013). Hermeneutical research "is a search for the fullness of living" (Van Manen, 1990, p.12), allows for interpretation of the data collected through interviews, and assumes neutrality is not achieved (Ricoeur & Thompson, 1981).

Delimitations

Delimitations are boundaries set by the researcher. In using young adults ages 24-31 the researcher limited the boundaries of the study to graduate students who were continuously enrolled in school, with an age threshold low enough to include high achievers who may have entered graduate school at an early age. Recruiting participants in this age group was intended to limit the study to those individuals with the drive, motivation, and academic ability to achieve a masters and or a doctoral degree. Participants were selected from a group of young professionals (graduates of masters and doctoral programs), rather than undergraduate programs in order to describe the shared experience of a select group of students. The participants attended universities across the United States and presently reside in the central region of Florida and Virginia. The area was chosen based on convenience for conducting interviews and a focus group, as well as the result of a snowball sampling which resulted in finding participants in

Virginia. Participants were not selected based on a specific degree program but on the degree earned (masters or doctorate).

Definitions

Terms relevant to the study are defined in this section.

1. *Biblical model of parenting*- Belief that parents have been charged by God to train their children to follow His commands (Bible).
2. *Family culture* - The beliefs and values within a family and those practices that reinforce those ideals (Bowman, Dill, Hunter, Juelfs-Swanson, 2012).
3. *Parental involvement* – Parent involvement in educational practices and experiences of their children (Jeynes, 2011).
4. *Parenting practices* – Behaviors parents practice in the course of parenting and interacting with their children that are related to outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).
5. *Parenting styles* – The “emotional climate in which parents raise their children” (Spera, 2005p. 127).
6. *Social learning theory* – Belief that learning takes place through observation (Bandura, 1977).
7. *Sociocultural theory* – Belief that learning takes place in the context of the surrounding culture (Vygotsky, 1978).
8. *Student success* – Student success is determined by one’s belief about education (Winston, 2013).
9. *Zone of proximal development* – Zone between a child’s ability to perform independently and perform with the help of a competent individual (Vygotsky, 1978).

Summary

In summary, the topic of parental involvement has been studied from many perspectives, primarily as it pertains to a parent's involvement with the school by communicating with the teacher and administration, attending parent meetings, volunteering for school events, visiting the classroom, and at home, assisting with school related activities such as homework, reading, and monitoring the completion of work. Therefore, a problem exists in understanding parental involvement outside of these boundaries. The purpose of this research was to allow graduates of masters and doctorate programs to describe how their parents' parenting practices fostered their academic success.

The significance of this study is shown by shedding more light on the topic of parental involvement and better understanding the role parents play in fostering academic success in ways that transcended involvement in school tasks and activities. Taking a qualitative approach to research, participants had the opportunity to describe practices in the home and family life that motivated their learning and helped to shape their academic achievement.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework for which this study is founded, and reviews the literature on parental involvement and student achievement. To better understand the research on the broad topic of parental involvement and identify the gap in the literature, after examining the theoretical framework, the review of the literature is organized as follows: parenting styles and practices that impact parental involvement, parental involvement and student motivation, parents' attitudes and beliefs, self-regulated learning and parental involvement, measuring parental involvement, and filling the gap. Although Van Manen (1990) suggests looking to related studies in phenomenological or hermeneutic studies to grasp a deeper understanding of the topic, most studies have used quantitative methods of research (Altschul, 2011; Baharudin, Hong, Lim, & Zulkefly, 2010; Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Greenman, Bodovski & Reed, 2011; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Walker et al., 2010). There are few phenomenological studies to review on specific parenting practices that foster academic success. As such, this review leads to an understanding of the gap in the literature for exploring the parenting practices that transcend school related practices reported in-depth by young adults.

Theoretical Framework

In providing a foundational basis for this study, there were three theoretical frameworks used to better understand parental involvement and its impact on a child's academic performance as follows: Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory/zone of proximal development, Bandura's (1977) social learning/observation theory, and the biblical model of parenting. Impact of parental involvement is presented through these theories.

Sociocultural Theory/Zone of Proximal Development

Two theories that provide a framework for understanding this study on parenting influences include psychologist Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory and zone of proximal development. Miller (2011) stated, "In the Vygotskian-sociocultural view, humans are embedded in a sociocultural matrix and human behavior cannot be understood independent of this ever-present matrix" (p. 166). Culture encompasses the "shared beliefs, values knowledge, skills, structured relationships, ways of doing things (customs), socialization practices, and symbol systems (such as spoken and written language)" (Miller, 2011, p. 172). Culture is the focus of this learning theory, recognizing that child rearing practices occur in the context of a family culture where values, beliefs, and practices influence a child's development.

Sociocultural theory views culture as ever changing and therefore affects both parenting and education (Miller, 2011).

In Vygotsky's (1978) view, learning takes place under three conditions. First, learning occurs in a cultural setting. Family is a culture within a culture and the standards and behaviors of parents have an effect on what children value and how they process information. Second, interaction with those in the cultural setting is also necessary for learning to take place, according to Vygotsky (1978). Children learn from interacting with their parents. This interaction occurs from infancy to adulthood at various levels based on the family culture. The how and what of that interaction influences the development of a child (Vygotsky, 1978). The last condition needed for learning to take place is described by Vygotsky (1978) as the zone of proximal development.

Vygotsky describes the difference between a child's ability to perform independently and his or her ability to perform with assistance as the zone of proximal development (Miller, 2011).

“The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation ... The actual development level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86-87). This theory of development explains that children build a framework of knowledge as they interact and learn with the help of a more competent person. Children learn how to accomplish a plethora of tasks with the help of others. From learning to tie shoes to driving a car, children are learning from the instruction and assistance they receive from their parents. This framework allows children to construct and store knowledge for the future (Miller, 2011). The opportunity children have to learn from their parents, to watch and observe their behavior and to have assistance completing tasks may help the child perform at a higher level (Miller, 2011) and “grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88).

Social Learning Theory

Bandura (1977) extends the understanding of sociocultural learning to include cognitive learning and explains that children acquire knowledge by observing. Learning “theories must demonstrate predictive power, and they must accurately identify casual factors, as shown by the fact that varying the postulated determinants produce related changes in behavior” (Bandura 1977, p. 2). Rather than explaining human behavior as the result of “inner forces” or external factors, Bandura (1977) believes that human behavior is understood by examining the “continuous reciprocal interaction between behavior and its controlling conditions” (p. 2). Individuals not only learn through personal experience with a phenomenon but through vicarious observation (Bandura, 1977). By observing behavior, individuals are informed about the consequences of certain actions which may serve to reinforce behaviors or function as a deterrent

for repeating the behavior. Learning through reinforcement and trial alone would be an arduous task for a child. However, “most of the behaviors that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example” (Bandura, 1977, p. 5) modeled by individuals.

Observational learning theory asserts that children learn in a social context by observation, imitation, understanding, and modeling behavior (Bandura, 1977). This learning takes place motivated by the praise and feedback children receive from an authority figure in their life (Miller, 2011). Four processes must take place for observational learning to occur: attention—the person must attend to the model’s behavior; retention—the person must remember the model’s behavior; motoric reproduction—the behavior or action must be practiced with feedback; and lastly, reinforcement or motivation for the behavior (Bandura 1977). The strength of reinforcement is significantly influenced by the teacher or model: “A model who repeatedly demonstrates desired responses, instructs others to reproduce them, physically prompts the behavior when it fails to occur, and then administers powerful rewards will eventually elicit matching responses in most people” (Bandura, 1977, p. 8).

Learning is therefore dependent on the child’s ability to observe modeled behavior by attending to a task, retaining the information learned, reproducing that behavior, and receiving feedback for reinforcement (Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory, also called observational learning theory, provides a framework for understanding the role parents play in the learning process of children. Social learning theory is distinguished from sociocultural learning theory in that social learning theory stresses the influence of modeling and observation in the learning process rather than learning from the culture through social interaction.

Parents are the first and most influential models that children observe on a regular basis. This influence has a significant impact on a child's educational achievement (Atta & Jamil, 2012). The home is uniquely designed to provide an environment where both social and observational learning occurs through the feedback of parents. Instruction from parents takes place in common everyday tasks: working together, discussion, discipline, playing games, reading books, running errands, and involvement in daily routines. While this education is informal it remains the primary source of learning for children (Van Brummelen, 2009).

Children observe the interaction of parents, observe parents completing tasks, and are given opportunity to practice the behaviors they observe (Bandura, 1977; Schultz, 2010). Observational learning begins before formal education and extends beyond the classroom as the parent and child go about the activities of life. Whether learning to make a bed, share a toy with a sibling or how to behave as a guest in someone's home, children watch, listen, and develop socially and cognitively from observing their parents (Bandura, 1977).

Biblical Model of Parenting

The biblical model of education and parenting is the foundation of the framework for parental involvement. The Bible places the responsibility for training children on the parents (Van Brummelen, 2002): "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). When a child is trained, he "Will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40). The influence and impact of parenting on a child's education creates a view of the world that becomes part of the framework from which they build knowledge. In examining education Schultz (2010) makes the point that "Throughout the course of human history, individuals and governments have used education to shape the worldview of their societies" (Schultz, 2010, p. 40). He goes on to say that "the most important factor in the development of a young person's

worldview is the influence of his teachers” (Schultz, 2010, p. 51) and parents are called upon by God to be the most influential teacher in a child’s life (Schultz, 2010).

In addition, the Bible speaks to the way in which a parent is to interact with a child in the training process. Proverbs 13:24 states that parents who love their children will diligently discipline their children, implying a consistent, purposeful practice of training. Fathers are not to provoke or frustrate their children, requiring patience, kindness and love in the training process (Ephesians 6:4). Love is seen as the overwhelming motivation for biblical instruction (Deuteronomy 6:5-7) and is similar to the authoritative parent that Baumrind (2005) addresses in discussing parenting typologies or the love oriented style of parenting described by Robert Sears in 1957 (Spera, 2005). Here, the parent is warm and caring, yet expects obedience and respect from their children. In addition to exhorting children to honor their father and mother (Exodus 20:12), children are told to hear “your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching; indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head and ornaments about your neck” (Proverbs 1:8-9).

Although the Bible places the primary responsibility for instruction on the parents, the Bible (Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 78) also addresses the need for the community to share in teaching the next generations (Van Brummelen, 2009). When the parent makes a decision to place a child in school the school’s responsibility is to support the training in the home (Schultz, 2010) and to work closely with parents to create an effective program (Van Brummelen, 2002, 2009). The Bible further states that training must be a purposeful, constant practice. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 instructs parents in this regard:

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ‘You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.’

Understanding the biblical model of parenting, social learning/observational theory, and zone of proximal development creates a foundation for the crucial role parents play in a child’s education (Bandura, 1977; Schultz, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Each of these theories is dependent on a person to model, motivate, and mentor children.

Parents, acting as the most influential authority figure in the child’s life, play a significant role in the learning process. The parent is in a position to provide the greatest opportunity for imparting knowledge and beliefs through storytelling, engaging in conversation, completing daily activities, and working through the problem-solving process with their child. In addition, the parent can provide a nurturing environment that fosters learning through attitudes, beliefs, modeling, and interaction, as well as training and loving discipline (Schultz, 2010). Bandura (1977) stated, “Under most circumstances, a good example is therefore a much better teacher than the consequences of unguided actions” (p. 5).

Learning theories suggest that parents have a significant role in child training and studies confirm the importance of parental involvement (Bandura, 1977; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Hayes, 2011; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978) but research on this topic is limited to quantitative studies that measure parental involvement with self-reporting surveys used by parents and teachers (Jeynes, 2012). Limited research is available related to understanding parental practices apart from school initiated activities whether in the school or in the home described by young adults to have fostered academic success or influenced achievement. This gap in the literature is addressed in this research by seeking to extend and refine the existing

knowledge related to parenting practices by employing qualitative research to explore in more depth those practices perceived to have impacted academic success by young adults from masters and doctoral programs. This literature review encompasses those studies most related to the topic of parenting practices and achievement.

Related Literature on Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is defined by Jeynes (2011) as “parental participation in the educational processes and experience of their children”. While research on the effect of parental involvement on academic success has been conducted for decades, much of the research has been focused on the why and how of parental involvement as that involvement relates to the school environment (Walker et al., 2010; Wang, 2015). In an attempt to understand parental involvement and its influence on academic achievement the attention has been directed toward the school environment and more formal ways of educating. Less is known about specific parenting practices in the home and parental training perceived by young adults that may influence academic success. Gordon and Cui (2012) suggest further study of parenting processes that broaden the current scope of parent behaviors and expectations in school involvement. Understanding this phenomenon can help provide information useful in parent education and student achievement. Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) assert that a paradigm shift is needed in defining and evaluating parental involvement.

Examination of parental involvement (PI) as it relates to a child’s academic performance has increased in an effort to better understand parental influence on learning (Areepattamannil, 2010; Wang, 2015). In a meta-analysis, Jeynes (2012) states that parental involvement is “considerably broader and more complicated than early parental involvement theories have acknowledged” (p. 9). Whereas parental involvement has been defined as the participation of

parents in their child's education process, the research on PI has broadened to include parenting practices and parenting styles. Parenting style is characterized by a consistent manner of parenting that creates the emotional climate for the parenting practices (Anderson, 2011). In contrast, parenting practices are specific behaviors in which parents engage in when interacting with their children (Anderson, 2011).

When discussing parental involvement and school achievement one thinks of a parent's participation in school-based involvement such as attending school meetings, volunteering in the classroom, attending school events, participating in a school-based parent group, and attending parent-teacher conferences. These are the activities that are often measured to determine parent involvement (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Walker et al., 2010). Brock and Edmunds (2010) assert that parental involvement is much more than meeting with the teacher and that "parents can do more [to help children succeed in school] by taking their child to the library or helping him or her set educational goals" (p. 55).

Home-based involvement has also been examined at some level and includes activities such as helping with homework, reading with the child, overseeing completion of school assignments, and asking about school-related learning (Altschul, 2011). Like other studies that include home-based involvement (Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Joshi & Acharya, 2013), the home-based involvement in Altschul's (2011) study encompassed school-related activities. Exploring practices in the home that may foster or influence the learning of a child in a broader context is necessary to better understand those behaviors that help to nurture academic success.

Over the years research has examined the effects of school based parental involvement on academic achievement, such as time spent helping with homework, monitoring completion of work, and having a presence in the classroom (Griffith, 1996; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001;

Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Walker et al., 2010). Some of these studies report on the differences of parental involvement based on race, economic status, or family structure (Altschul, 2011; Banerjee et al., 2009; Hayes, 2011; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001; Plunkett, Behnke, Sands & Choi, 2009; Suizzo, Pahlke, Yarnell, Chen & Romero, 2014; Weiss et al., 2003). Others have looked at parents' motivational factors for involvement, their beliefs and educational expectations for their children, parents' skills and time availability for involvement, and school to home communication (Baharudin et al., 2010; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Kyle, 2011; Walker et al., 2010). Walker, Shenker and Hoover –Dempsey (2010) report that an invitation from the child or the school to be involved is a significant factor perceived by parents to motivate them to become involved with home-based and school-based activities. Additionally, parents are more likely to be involved at school when parents believe that the school provides ample opportunity for involvement (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012).

Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams and Keating (2009) conducted a study to examine parental involvement in school related activities both at school and in the home reporting on parental behaviors related to active management of school activities such as homework and reading. The Rogers et al. (2009) study provides insight into how both the mother's and the father's behavior, and the student's characteristics interact and affect student achievement. "Parental involvement seems to influence achievement through the mediational role of the child's academic competence consistent with the assumptions of the family-school relationship model" (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams & Keating, 2009, p. 12). In addition, active management of achievement activities by both parents was shown to have a positive effect, although excessive pressure by the fathers was shown to negatively impact the students' performance (Rogers et al., 2009).

Comparing homeschool and public school students' perception of school related parent involvement on academic achievement, students were asked to evaluate their parents' involvement based on Epstein's (2007) six categories of parental involvement and showed practices with little impact. "The survey items where parent involvement was not found to have an impact upon academic achievement were helping with school work, listening to students about school work, encouraging students regarding school work, attending teacher conferences, attending school functions, reviewing student report cards, teachers contacting parents about school, teachers sending information home, teachers notifying parents about school occurrences, and teachers effectively communicating with parents" (Barwegen, Falciani, Putnam, Reamer, & Stair, 2004, p. 45).

Other studies confirm that the quality of the parent involvement perceived by their children is important to the child's sense of achievement and emotional function (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Walker et al., 2010; Wang, 2015) and that how parents interact with their children can effect achievement (Suizzo et al., 2014). Providing resources is also important for student learning. When reporting the results of a study conducted to determine the correlation between different types of parental involvement on reading achievement, Midraj and Midraj (2011) found that parents' involvement at home by providing learning resources for their children was significantly associated with comprehension achievement. These findings provide the impetus to understand more about what children observe in the home and learn from their parents that may foster learning at higher levels.

Parenting Styles and Practices that Impact Parental Involvement

Parenting style has been defined as the way a parent expresses his or her attitudes to the child which "creates an emotional climate" in the home (Darling & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488).

Parenting styles have been studied to find links to creativity (Miller, Lambert & Speirs Neumeister, 2012), adolescent autonomy (Baumrind, 2005), school achievement (Areepattamannil, 2010; Ishak et al., 2012; Kordi & Baharudin, 2010; Parsasirat et al., 2013; Spera, 2005), and adolescent adjustment (Lee et al., 2006). To better understand parenting styles, four typologies have been identified as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, (Baumrind, 1978), and indifferent or uninvolved (Maccoby and Martin, 1983).

Authoritarian parenting is characterized by strict rules and punishment without clear explanation for the expected behavior (Cherry, 2014). This is expressed by Baumrind (2005) as high demandingness and low responsiveness. Whereas the authoritative parent is warm and nurturing the authoritarian parent is demanding and sometimes harsh. This type of parent communicates less effectively by using control and strict rules to express their expectations (Baumrind, 2005). Children may meet the demands for a time but generally rebel during the adolescent years.

Home environments with authoritarian mothers are less conducive to fostering creativity in their children (Miller et al., 2012) and may lead to negative behaviors (Lee, Daniels, & Kissinger, 2006). This style might be most like the object-oriented style described by Robert Sears (1957) after conducting 300 intense interviews with mothers regarding their child rearing and disciplinary practices (Spera, 2005). This parent uses “maternal use (and withdrawal) of tangible objects” to manage behavior. Rather than trying to understand their parents’ behavior and internalizing their parents’ values, children with parents practicing an object-oriented style, use their energies focused on avoiding the withdrawal of objects (Spera, 2005). Lacking self-confidence and motivation, these children generally do not perform as well in school.

The permissive parent is one that allows the child to have control, acting more as a friend than a parent (Cherry 2014). The permissive parent makes few demands, has low expectations and is lenient with regards to discipline. Not surprisingly, left to interact with their world as they see fit, high achieving college students reporting that their parents practice a permissive style of parenting show greater signs of creativity (Miller et al., 2012). However, such positive outcomes for children of permissive parents are not supported in other research (Baumrind, 2005; Ishak et al., 2011, Temple, 2010), some reporting negative effects on academic achievement (Dehyadegary, Yaacob, Juhari, & Talib, 2012; Parsasirat et al, 2013) and relationship between permissive parenting and student's grade point average (Temple, 2010). Communicating the negative effects of permissiveness and parental control on academic achievement in adolescents (Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Parsasirat et al., 2013) and students in general is an important task for educators.

Permissive and uninvolved parents are less responsive, demand less and are less controlling than the other parenting styles. Children of permissive parents according to Spera's (2005) review of Baumrind (1967) are less self-reliant, less self-controlled and less proficient than those with authoritative or authoritarian parents. According to Parsasirat, Montazer, Yusooff, Subhi and Nen (2013) permissive parenting is associated with low expectations and children who disregard teachers' instruction suggesting this may contribute to the negative relationship between this parenting style and academic achievement. The uninvolved parenting style might be described as dismissive, disinterested or unresponsive. The uninvolved parent shows little emotional involvement, withholds affection and provides little or no supervision (Cherry, 2014; Miller et al., 2012).

Authoritative parents, on the other hand, have high expectations that are clearly communicated and understood by the child. These parents offer support, warmth and encouragement, and view discipline as corrective rather than punitive (Baumrind, 2005). Authoritative parents offer autonomy support, exercise behavioral control rather than psychological control, and encourage critical thinking (Baumrind, 2005). Parents practicing an authoritative style of parenting rather than an authoritarian or passive style had been associated with children more engaged in learning. Kordi and Baharudin (2010) in examining parenting attitudes and practices reported that authoritative parenting styles have been shown to have a higher level of efficacy on a student's school achievement in some cultures, confirming the idea that parenting styles or beliefs about parenting, influence student outcomes. Joshi and Acharya (2013) also report that children perform better with authoritative parents than with permissive or authoritarian parents.

Authoritative parenting is linked with a positive self-concept (one's attitudes and understanding of one's values, attributes and ability) which fosters academic achievement (Ishak et al., 2012). "Self-concept usually signifies a person's tendency to regard different aspects of his behavior positively or negatively. Within a social learning approach, a negative self-concept is defined in terms of frequent negative self-reinforcement of one's behavior; conversely, a favorable self-concept is reflected in a disposition to engage in high positive self-reinforcement" (Bandura, 1977, p. 31). By providing love, showing respect, accepting a child's individuality, and encouraging feelings of equality in the child, authoritative parenting promotes confidence (Ishak et al., 2012). Additionally, authoritative parents encourage a child to self-correct and develop problem solving skills. In this manner, authoritative parents can help a child feel

confident and develop a positive self-concept, which in turn affects the child's academic performance (Ishak et al., 2012).

Studies show that children of authoritative parents are more “mature, independent, prosocial, active, and achievement-oriented than children of non-authoritative parents” (Parsasirat et al., 2013; Spera, 2005, p. 135). Authoritative parents are supportive of school activities, help with homework, attend school functions, have high expectations for their children, and offer their children some autonomy—all of which contribute to their wellbeing (Parsasirat et al., 2013). Allowing children to demonstrate competency and take responsibility for challenging tasks, encourages persistence and self-reliance (Pino-Pasternak & Whitehead, 2010). This shifting of responsibility from parent to child is the essence of Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development where the child develops cognitive and metacognitive strategies with the assistance of a competent supportive model.

While studying parenting styles helps to understand a relationship between parenting and student achievement, it does not provide specific parent practices or motivators for academic success. In contrast to parenting styles, parenting practices according to Darling and Steinberg (1993) are the behaviors parents perform in the course of their “parental duties” (p. 488). Unlike styles that affect the atmosphere in the home, parenting practices are directly related to outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Spera (2005) explores parenting practices and styles defining practices as distinct behaviors used to socialize ones children and styles as the “emotional climate in which parents raise their children” (p. 127). Examples of practices include monitoring and sharing parents' values, goals and ambitions. A survey of more than 6,000 parents revealed that the pressure and control of parent monitoring—checking homework, regulating time spent on activities that distract from school work—may be practices which are negatively linked to

achievement and academic performance across grade levels (Areepattamannil, 2010). Reporting on the effect of parenting practice and parenting styles on adolescent school performance, Spera (2005) shows a positive relationship between authoritative parenting styles and increased student achievement. This contradicts Areepattamannil (2010), who associates parent monitoring with a negative relationship to achievement as a practice of an authoritative parent.

Examining parenting practices Lee, Daniel and Kissinger (2006) describe decision making, discussion, involvement, expectation, and family rule as attributes of parenting that have a positive influence on students. These practices highlight the kind of interaction and importance of parent-child interaction as a positive influence on children. An attentive parent is one who seeks intimacy (close relationship) with his or her children. Such closeness produces positive outcomes for the parent-child relationship and the child (Merry & Howell, 2009).

According to Joshi and Acharya (2013), “proper guidance and assistance at home” is a practice significantly related to student success (p. 12). Providing a protective environment, proper discipline, offering reward through encouragement, and praise were all found to have a positive relationship to achievement in children as well (Joshi & Acharya, 2013). These results confirm the findings of those studies about parenting styles, in which the combined warmth and discipline of the authoritative style prove most effective. Similarly, Rogers et al. (2009) reports the “use of encouragement, nurturance, and support as effective methods for enhancing achievement and self-concept” (p. 18).

One practice that has been examined in studies which link particular practices to adolescent school performance is encouragement (Chabra & Kumari, 2011). Parental encouragement is defined as intentional “care, concern approval and guidance” which promotes reoccurring desired behavior (Chabra & Kumari, 2011, p. 73). Parental encouragement as an

attribute of the authoritative parent and measured by the frequency of parental praise for school performance and effort, is associated with “higher school achievement” (Areepattamannil, 2010, p. 6). The practice of encouraging a child is also linked to a child’s achievement motivation or the child’s “drive towards the achievement of success in academic work” (Chabra & Kumari, 2011, p. 73).

Parenting Involvement and Student Motivation

Other studies point to a positive relationship between parental encouragement and achievement motivation (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Joshi & Acharya, 2013). Recently, Joshi and Acharya (2013) examined how children are motivated and influenced by the home environment and the role parents play in achievement motivation. Achievement motivation has been defined “as the need for success or the attainment of excellence” (Joshi & Acharya, 2013, p. 1) and “motivation refers to the student’s energy and drive to learn work effectively and achieve their potential at school, the behavior that follows from this energy and drive” (Joshi & Acharya, 2013, p. 2). Highly motivated students are associated with higher levels of academic success and low dropout rates (Atta & Jamil, 2012).

Parenting practices positively related to achievement motivation are described by Joshi and Acharya (2013) as protectiveness, conformity, providing reward, providing punishment (or discipline), and nurturing, while “deprivation of privileges, social isolation, permissiveness, and rejection are significantly negatively correlated to academic areas and overall achievement motivation of adolescents” (p. 8). “Studies have proved that a supportive nurturing environment at home could enhance a child’s achievement” and that a home environment that provides protection, discipline, reward, and love has a “positive influence on adolescent achievement” (Joshi & Acharya, 2013, p. 2).

Where does the motivation to achieve come from? Children are highly influenced by their parents' beliefs and behaviors (Chabra & Kumari, 2011), often wanting to please or gain approval from their parents when parents invest time and involvement in their schooling (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Wang, 2015). Driven by relationship, children may have a desire to please and attend to the expectations of those individuals central in their lives. This parent-oriented motivation by external forces (the parent) is described in self-determination theory as "controlled" whereas internalizing parents' goals and values is viewed as "autonomous" motivation (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Wang, 2015). Either way, the "closer children feel to parents, the more they are motivated in school by parent-oriented reasons," thereby increasing achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012, p. 821).

According to Cheung and Pomerantz (2012) parental involvement is "predictive of children's subsequent autonomous motivation in school" (p. 829). The practice of parents taking interest and enjoyment in the learning process may have a positive effect on children's attentiveness to school as well (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Wang (2015) suggested that parental involvement and its positive relationship to students' performance is the result of children's perception of that involvement with perceived involvement and interest motivating students. Conversely, how is motivation hindered? A child's intrinsic motivation for performing well in school is decreased by excessive parent pressure and control (Aprettamannil, 2010; Rogers et al., 2009) as well as by permissive parenting, which lacks guidance and responsiveness (Baumrind, 2005; Parsasirat et al., 2013).

In addition to encouragement and motivation, parent-child communication or engagement is another parenting practice explored to better understand the effects of PI on academic performance. Parent-child communication is a necessary component of PI and essential for a

loving home environment (Jeynes, 2011). As a form of socialization, a parent's interaction with his or her child, discussing the school experience (work load, teachers, challenges, social events, activities, etc.) has a positive effect on achievement (Altschul, 2011). This parent-child engagement takes place outside the classroom and involves interaction unrelated to school matters.

“Extracurricular instruction, educational resources in the home,” and parental involvement related to enrichment activities such as music performances and visiting the library have been found to have a significant positive impact on test scores in a longitudinal study of 1,609 Mexican American youth (Altschul, 2011, p. 166). In this study, parent-child communication and parent expectations were shown to be more influential than parent involvement with academics (Altschul, 2011). Jeynes (2011), reporting the findings of a meta-analysis, also points out that high expectations and communication are “powerful aspects of parental involvement” (p. 10). Those expectations agreed upon and understood by the parent and child, are of greatest significance to achievement. Subtle expectations of import might include agreement on personal work ethic and the value of and sacrifice needed to attend college (Jeynes, 2011).

The implications from these studies can be used by educators to inform parents and teachers about ways to improve the parent-child relationship in the home that will have a positive effect on academic achievement. Learning how parenting practices and the home environment influence academic achievement must be shared with both educators and parents. In an effort to increase achievement motivation, how might a parent express genuine encouragement or communicate their love and shared values? What other practices in the home environment might be described by young adults as having motivated or fostered achievement?

Parents' Attitudes and Beliefs

Learning more about parents' attitudes and beliefs as they relate to parenting and education is another way to better understand how parental involvement influences academic achievement and provides information for increasing PI. Parenting practices are a product of parents' attitudes and beliefs about education and child training. Those beliefs may stem from a family faith, the educational level of the parents, or a parent's personal experience with school. In examining family faith, one study found a relationship between family religious practices, parenting practices and student achievement, reporting that a higher level of religious participation may be a factor in academic performance (Seong Park & Bonner, 2008). This supports the findings that education in the home that is linked to student achievement is broader than the practice of helping children with homework and attending school meetings. As Green (2003) argues, the family is the God-centered learning center, "where [children] are to learn, from the example and instruction of their parents" (Kindle Edition).

Parents' attitude toward educational goals for their children, affects both parental involvement and student achievement. A positive relationship exists between the educational goals parents have for their children and the involvement practices of parents on school performance (Areepattamannil, 2010; Baharudin et al., 2010; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Wang, 2015). Of the many variables of parental involvement (assisting with homework, parent-school communication, supervision at home) explored in a meta-analysis, "parents' aspirations and expectations of children's educational achievement appears to have the strongest relationship with students' academic achievement," and parent supervision of school work the weakest (Fan & Chen, 2001, p. 13).

Baharudin et al. (2010) also found this connection between parents' education goals and PI to be true among single parents but further states that overall, "it is what the parents 'actually do' that matters the most to the adolescents' academic success" (Baharudin et al., 2010, p. 6). This study shows it is "parenting quality" (perceived by the children) that may increase the well-being of children in single family homes rather than what parents report they believe about involvement in the education process (Baharudin et al., 2010, p. 6). This quality of parental involvement impacts the child's perceived level of competence (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Wang, 2015).

Multiple issues have been studied with regards to parental involvement as follows: the relationship between parent expectations and academic achievement (Reynolds, 1992); between students' and parents' perceptions of parent involvement; and how race and socioeconomic status are related to parent involvement (Banerjee et al., 2011; Hayes, 2011; Hickman, Greenwood, & Miller, 1995; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Suizzo et al., 2014). With respect to parent expectations for their children's education, Hayes, (2014) found high aspirations for their children to be meaningfully linked to parental involvement and student outcomes in African American adolescents, as did Areepattamannil (2010), with a large population of Canadian parents of children 5-18 years old. Wang (2015), who examined parental expectation and parental involvement as predictors of Chinese middle school students' English performance, found that perceived high parental expectations resulted in higher English grades. It has been suggested to school psychologists, in making recommendations for improving parental involvement practices in secondary schools, that parents be trained how to express "high educational aspirations to their children" as a means of improving academic performance (Hornby & Witte, 2010, p. 506).

The relationship between the parents' education and the socioeconomic status of parents to student achievement found both of these factors to be independent determiners of parental involvement (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007). According to Areepattamannil (2010), higher family income and higher levels of education are linked with higher levels of student achievement. Not all agree. Although the parents' educational level may not have a significant impact on academic performance (Parsasirat et al., 2013; Wang, 2015), it does seem to influence the parents' level of involvement (Areepattamannil, 2010; Wang, 2015) which may indirectly affect student outcomes. Some suggest that children from higher income families have more resources available to them to enrich their children's education, leading to higher achievement (Areepattamannil, 2010; Gordon & Tourva, 2007). Conducting a case study of a working class family, Vassollo (2012) hints that socioeconomic status and parents' education are linked to the ability of parents to effectively foster self-regulated learning which is known to increase student performance (Pino-Pasternak & Whitehead, 2010), concluding that more research is needed to "explore the possibility that class-based differences related to students self-regulatory structures exist" (p. 524).

Closely related to the parents' education is the parents' view of education. In the past five years, research has begun to explore more specific parenting practices and parents' beliefs about education reported by teachers, school leaders and students (Jeynes, 2012).

Areepattamannil (2010) makes a connection between parents' beliefs about education and their parenting style, claiming that parents who place importance on his or her child's educational achievement are those parents who exercise encouragement and support (the authoritative parent). Parents who value education are the ones inclined to be more involved with their children's education (Wang, 2015). The attitude of parents toward epistemic beliefs

(knowledge) and parenting styles were studied to determine the influence of these factors on performance (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007). This study concluded that professionals involved with increasing parental involvement “in their children’s educational process could take into consideration this study’s finding that parents who believe that their involvement matters will find ways to get involved” (Georgiou & Tourva, 2007, p. 7).

It may also be true that children who perceive their parents to be involved perform better in school. Reporting on the “effects of perceived parental engagement on adolescent’s academic achievement in immigrant families” (p. 1), Plunkett et al. (2009) stated that the most significant finding was that “perceived engagement” of their parents, “especially mothers, can have an indirect influence on adolescents’ grades, . . . and [their] own achievement engagement” (p. 267).

Self-regulated Learning and Parental Involvement

Self-regulatory learning (SRL) is known to significantly impact academic achievement (Pino-Pasternak & Whitehead, 2010) and has been studied in conjunction with parental involvement (Pino-Pasternak & Whitehead, 2010; Xu, Kushner Benson, Mudrey-Camino, & Steiner, 2010). A self-regulated learner is a student who possesses the ability to manage and complete tasks, is intrinsically motivated to succeed at tasks, uses effective strategies for completing work, and has the ability to adjust those strategies when needed (Pino-Pasternak & Whitehead, 2010; Zimmerman 1989). Self-regulated learning is based on Bandura’s (1986, 1989) social cognitive theory that explains the importance of the social environment in the development of a child’s self-regulatory skills (Xu et al., 2010). SRL can take place in the classroom and/or the home environment.

Parent and family practices have been known to influence the development of self-regulated learning. Explicit modeling, implicit modeling, direct instruction, and facilitation are pedagogical strategies that support the development of SRL when modeled in the home (Vassallo, 2010). Parental modeling plays a significant role in the development of SRL and according to Martinez-Pons (2002), precedes the child's ability to develop the skills needed for SRL. Helping with homework, providing instruction, modeling positive behavior, working with teachers, and being purposeful about their instructive role as a parent are ways parents can help children to self-regulate in the learning process (Vassallo, 2012).

Pino-Pasternak and Whitebread (2010) found that a child's ability to develop SRL was influenced by the social and instructional interaction with his or her parents and indicate that warmth is a factor that promotes SRL. Encouraging autonomy (Pino-Pasternak & Whitebread, 2010), parent expectations (Xu et al., 2010), parental goals (Pintrich, 2000), and management of the home environment (Vassallo, 2012) are also factors found to contribute to the development of self-regulated learning. Xu et al. (2010), in a study with fifth graders, examined seven parenting practices and their relationship to student achievement: "parent-child communication, school involvement, TV viewing rules, homework help, homework frequency, parental education expectations, and extracurricular activities" (p. 240). Of these variables, Xu et al. (2010) found that school involvement and parental educational expectations have the greatest positive impact on reading achievement and SRL development, reporting that parental involvement "contributes to increased/decreased SRL skills" (p. 257).

The literature on SRL suggests the use of qualitative inquiry to better understand and examine genuine parent-child interaction (Pino-Pasternak & Whitebread, 2010; Xu et al., 2010). "The challenge still remains to identify in more detail which specific types of parent behaviors

relate to or predict particular aspect of SRL, and to discover the nature of these relationships and inter-relationships” (Pino-Pasternak & Whitebread, 2010, p. 233).

Reviewing the current literature shows a gap in understanding parental practices apart from school initiated activities, whether in the school or in the home, perceived by young adults to have fostered academic success or influenced achievement. In addition, the research is primarily quantitative work measuring parental involvement with self-reporting surveys. This research extends the existing knowledge related to parenting practices by describing in more depth those practices perceived to have impacted academic success by young adults.

Measuring Parental Involvement

The literature on parental involvement in education has measured involvement more from the parent’s perspective than the child’s (Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Walker et al., 2010). While some question the reliability of a young child’s report, others have recommended that the child’s perspective be considered when studying parental involvement (Walker et al., 2010). Although there are few studies reporting from a young child’s perspective, there are some that examine the phenomenon of parental involvement from the perspective of adolescent through college age students (Altschul, 2011; Baharudin et al., 2010; DeDonno & Fagan, 2013; Gordon & Cui, 2012; Hornby & Witte, 2010; Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Lee et al., 2006; Parsasirat et al., 2013; Spera, 2005). The study conducted by Barwegan et al. (2004) showed a positive relationship or no relationship “between academic achievement and student’s perceiving higher levels of parent involvement” (p. 45).

DeDonno and Fagan (2013) extend the literature with regard to children’s perception of parental involvement, using college age students to examine the influence of family attributes on academic self-concept. DeDonno and Fagan’s (2013) study found that the marital status of

parents is significant in determining a student's self-concept, showing greater academic self-concept with intact families. As expected, positive parent-child communication also has a positive effect on academic self-concept and the influence in the home is shown to affect students into their college years (DeDonno & Fagan, 2013). Another similar study conducted by Gordon and Cui, (2012) extends the research by examining school based parental involvement (help with homework, attendance at school functions, and communication with the teacher), which significantly affects achievement reported by adolescents and suggests that the influence of parents on the academic achievement of students continues into young adulthood (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011). This quantitative study moves the research forward in two ways: by examining a child's perception of parental involvement and by using older students to report. Recommendations for future research include exploring more specific parenting practices (Gordon & Cui, 2012).

Finally, a study by Martin-Chang, Odette, and Reanne (2011) used questionnaires to measure parental involvement perceived by high school students. Although reporting from the child's perspective has increased, most studies reviewed use surveys, which do not allow for a more in-depth view of parental involvement, and these studies focus on school based activities rather than examining the home environment. Pino-Pasternak and Whitebread, (2010) (using a mixed method of research) report on the lack of qualitative inquiry in studying the role of parents in self-regulated learning, noting the value qualitative descriptions would provide in deepening the understanding of the phenomenon of parental involvement.

Filling the Gap

A review of the literature on parental involvement and parenting styles on student achievement demonstrates a gap when it comes to learning about this phenomenon from the

child's perspective. One study asking students to self-report levels of parental involvement found significantly higher national test scores among students who reported high levels of parental involvement than students reporting low levels of parental involvement (Barwegen et al., 2004). Most studies use self-reporting parent surveys or teachers' assessment of parental involvement (Areepattamannil, 2010; Baharudin et al., 2010; Banerjee et al., 2011; DeDonno & Fagan, 2013; Hayes, 2011; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Ishak et al., 2013; Midraj & Midraj, 2011; Parsasirat et al., 2013; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012; Suizzo et al., 2014).

Another study suggests that "adolescents may be better informants for their own well-being and using adolescents' report could yield better results for the study" (Baharudin et al., 2010, p. 149) when examining and describing parental involvement. Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) in their study, *Linking Parental Motivations for Involvement and Student Proximal Achievement Outcomes in Homeschooling and Public Schooling Settings*, examined the differences in two groups of self-reporting highly involved parents and found that while the homeschool parents reported "significantly stronger efficacy" and a "more positive perceptions of their children's proximal achievement attributes" the differences existed only with the parent's reporting, not their children's reporting, and suggested further research explore parental involvement from the child's perspective (p. 362).

After a quantitative study using parent self-reporting of parental involvement, Hayes (2011) also suggests future studies include "perceptions of parents, students and teachers" to examine variables that predict parental involvement (p. 164). Green and Hoover-Dempsey (2007) suggests that future research include a more in-depth look at "children's perceptions of parents' involvement, to give the research community a richer understanding of parental roles in children's learning processes and outcomes" (p. 283).

In addition to researchers suggesting that parental involvement be understood from the child's perspective, Banerjee, Harrell, and Johnson (2011), in addressing the fact that most research examines school related involvement, state that future research should examine the “additive contributions of multiple components of parental involvement in education and racial/ethnic socialization messages and practices” (p. 603). Parental involvement has been defined or assumed to relate to communication with the teacher rather than communication between parent and child (Brock & Edmunds, 2010). Chabra and Kumari (2011) recommended that teachers, educators, and leaders create awareness in parents, of the importance of the home environment on academic achievement motivation.

Examining a broader range of parental behaviors and parenting processes, Gordon and Cui (2012) confirm the need to look beyond the role and efficacy of parental involvement in school related activities. Likewise, Walker et al., (2010) recommend that research explore the influence of parent-child interactions to better understand how children benefit from learning mechanisms.

In a meta-analysis on parental involvement programs, Jeynes (2012), states that new research is beginning to explore more subtle aspects of parental involvement. Factors such as communication between parent and child, maintaining a loving home environment, and practices in the home, that foster these factors, are yet to be examined. Joshi and Acharya (2013) along with Weiss et al. (2003) also suggest exploring more subtle aspects of parental involvement. Learning about parenting practices perceived by graduates of masters and doctoral programs describing the home environment and family interaction they believe to have fostered academic success, extends the literature of this phenomenon and helps to broaden the scope of understanding.

Summary

In summarizing this chapter, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and zone of proximal development, Bandura's (1977) social learning/observational learning theory, and the biblical model of parenting constitute the theoretical framework for this study. The literature in the area of parental involvement and school achievement has been primarily focused on involvement in the school and home-based school initiated activities (Baharudin et al., 2010; Jeynes, 2012) like completing homework, reading, checking work, attending school meetings, and participating in parent groups, revealing a need to study parenting practices related to a child's learning process that are not initiated by the school. The literature review shows parental involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on student achievement, but research is limited when it comes to an in-depth understanding of practices in the home that students perceive to influence their academic success.

In addition to the limited scope of understanding, the literature indicates that most research has been quantitative in nature and self-reporting by parents, teachers or in some cases students (Areepattamannil, 2010; Baharudin et al., 2010; Banerjee et al., 2011; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; DeDonno & Fagan, 2013; Hayes, 2011; Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Ishak et al., 2013; Midraj & Midraj, 2011; Stacer & Perrucci, 2012). Researchers have made recommendations to advance the study of parental involvement by taking a closer look at the phenomenon of parental involvement from a student's perspective (Banerjee et al., 2011; Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007; Walker et al., 2010; Xu et al., 2010). Additionally, "although previous research has emphasized the importance of global assessments of parenting styles, new evidence points to the value of pinpointing actual parental practices" (Lee et al., 2006, p. 256). No known

research has explored an in-depth view of parenting practices perceived by young adults to have fostered learning conducted by this study.

This study looks beyond the school activities to describe the family dynamics, the interactions and practices in the home that motivate a student to achieve at high levels.

There are several possible benefits of this study to society. First, the results seek to help educators to better understand how the dynamics of the home impact academic success in order to provide parent education regarding these findings and increase student achievement. Second, parents may benefit from this study in learning about specific practices for better parenting that foster academic success, described by grown children who have been successful in their educational career. Lastly, this study confirms and extends the literature on parental involvement and practices in the home (unrelated to school activities) that foster achievement and serves as a basis for further study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This chapter includes a description of the following: the design method, the research questions, the participants, setting for the study, procedures used for conducting the study, researcher's role, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical consideration. A phenomenological approach to research is used for this study to describe the parenting practices that graduates of masters and doctoral programs report having experienced with their parents that they perceived fostered academic success. The research focuses on "what" parenting practices the participants experienced growing up and "how" those practices may have influenced their academic performance (Creswell, 2013).

Design

In order to describe the parenting practices as a phenomenon that graduates of masters and doctoral programs experience as having influenced their academic success, a qualitative approach to research was conducted. More specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology was used because this approach is both descriptive (phenomenological) and interpretive (hermeneutic) (Van Manen, 1990). The method for conducting this phenomenological study allowed the participants to tell stories and share their experience in-depth and the design allowed for an interpretation of the reported experiences by the researcher. Aware that "hermeneutics itself puts us on guard against the illusion or pretension of neutrality" (Ricoeur & Thompson, 1981, p. 43), I bring to the study experience with my own children who were academically successful and the experience of observing parenting practices related to student achievement over decades. Hermeneutical phenomenology is a method that assumes the interpretation of data and asks the question "what are the conditions under which a human act took place or a product was produced that makes it possible to interpret its meaning" (Patton, 2002, p. 133)?

This hermeneutical phenomenological study provides a detailed description of how twelve, 24-31 year old graduates of masters and doctoral programs described parenting practices that fostered academic success and helps to understand the “essence” of participants’ shared experiences that might otherwise be lost using a quantitative method of research (Creswell, 2013). In learning about the individual experience of each participant a common understanding of the phenomenon emerged (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

RQ1 How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success?

RQ2 In what ways did participants’ parents’ parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success?

RQ3 How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success?

RQ4 Which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success?

Setting

Young adults from the central region of Florida and Virginia were asked to participate in this study. This region of Florida has several universities with graduate programs (medical, pharmacy, and law, specifically, as well as a large state university with multiple graduate programs). It is also an area that attracts individuals from other parts of the country. Half of the participants attended graduate school in Florida; the others attended universities across the United States. Three participants from Virginia were the result of a snowball sampling.

Most interviews were conducted at a Panera Bread location convenient for the participant. Due to three participants living in Virginia these interviews and their focus group was conducted by phone. The face to face focus group took place in a private location convenient for the participants.

Recording devices were used for both the interviews and the focus groups. Open-ended questions and probes were used during the interviews to facilitate the discussion for the interview and focus groups. Probes for the focus group were centered on the common experiences collected from the interviews.

Participants

In addition to “student engagement and academic performance” students who attend graduate school demonstrate an interest in learning and those graduate students motivated by the learning process are more “self-sufficient” than “those who are motivated more by the outcome [grades]” (Scepansky & Bjornsen, 2003, p. 575). These characteristics of graduate students provide a basis for learning more about how parents may have influenced their motivation and academic success. Creswell (2013) reports phenomenological studies to have used one to more than three hundred participants but states that a narrow range of sample size is more common, citing studies with 3-10 individuals. For this reason, selection of participants consisted of a purposeful snowball sampling of 12 young adults, male and female, 24-31 years old, who hold a masters or doctoral degree from a university regionally accredited and who identify their parents as having been influential in their education.

An email was sent to individuals known to the researcher believed to fit the criteria for participating in this study with a request to identify other individuals who met the criteria and shared the phenomenon. In this way snowball sampling was achieved (Creswell, 2013).

Potential participants were then sent a letter requesting participation in this study with the following conditions: participants were between 22-32 years old, hold a masters or doctoral degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and viewed parenting practices as strongly significant in fostering their academic success. This resulted in 22 responses. A screening survey was used to determine the level of perceived parental involvement that contributed to participants' achievement.

Participants were chosen based on age, level of college completed, and those who rated "I believe the parenting practices of their parents helped to foster academic success" and "my parents helped to develop my worldview and critical thinking skills" as a four or five on the screening survey, based on a Likert scale with five being strongly agree. Other items on the survey were also evaluated for strong agreement. No boundaries were set with regard to the parents' socioeconomic status, marital status, education, race, or religious affiliation. Likewise, no boundaries were set on the specific area of study, number of degrees earned, gender, socioeconomic status, marital status, race or the religious affiliation of the participants. An attempt was made to achieve diversity in participants' gender, age, degree, and race. This resulted in five male and seven female participants, ten white, one Middle Eastern, and one Indian, with seven holding master's degrees and five with doctorates. All participants self-reported earning a GPA of 3.0 or higher in their graduate program. Refer to Table 1 for group demographic information.

Table 1

Group Demographics

Gender		Age		Education			Degree Earned		GPA		Race	
M	F	24-27	28-31	Home	Public	Private	Masters	Doctor	3.0-3.5	3.6-4.0	White	Other
5	7	3	9	5	3	4	7	5	3	8	10	2

The screening survey included twenty three statements that referenced a parenting practice for which participants rated their agreement on a scale of 1-5 with 1-“strongly disagree”, 2-“disagree”, 3-“somewhat agree”, 4-“agree”, and 5-“strongly agree” (see Appendix A). Statements with regard to parent practices related to school included such items as: my parent/s regularly shared with me the importance of school, my parent/s helped me balance homework, home chores and outside activities, my parent/s attended most assemblies and other special events at the school, and my parent/s monitored my progress and needs in each subject. Some of the items related to general parent practices included: my parent/s read to me often, my parent/s discussed with me how to manage my time, my parent/s talked about family history or ethnic heritage, my parent/s took me to the library regularly and my parent/s took me to events sponsored by a community, religious or ethnic group.

Prior to having participants complete the survey, the screening survey was administered to three individuals who fit the research criteria and were known by the researcher to have grown up in a family with parents highly active in their overall education. The scores from the initial surveys functioned as a basis for setting the range of scores needed by each participant to be considered. A respondent strongly agreeing with all the statements would result in a score of 115, indicating a high level of parental involvement and interaction in the learning process whether at school or at home. Scores from the pilot group were 101, 104, and 115. Since the purpose of the study was to describe the parenting practices perceived to have fostered academic success by graduates of masters and doctoral programs, having participants with a common experience was important. For this reason, the survey scores of chosen participants ranged from 92-115 with an assumption that participants would have common stories to share. In addition, all the participants strongly agreed to the statement: I believe the parenting practices of my

parents helped to foster my academic success; and all but one (who agreed), strongly agreed with the statement: I believe my parents helped to develop my worldview and critical thinking skills. By way of contrast, ten other individuals who responded to the request to participate and who considered themselves candidates had scores that ranged from 72-90.

Procedures

Recruitment began following IRB approval (Appendix B) and took place through personal contacts and local professionals to identify possible participants based on level of education and age. A recruitment letter (Appendix C) was sent to potential participants via email providing them with a brief explanation of the study to include the timeline, time commitment, compensation, and the screening survey to ensure that participants met the criteria (age, education level, GPA, and belief that parenting practices played a significant role in their academic success). The letter included a request for the survey to be returned within seven days with a follow-up email being sent on day five (Appendix D). This process took significantly longer than expected.

Consent forms were sent along with the screening survey as an email attachment with a request to sign and return (Appendix E). Once the surveys and consent forms were returned, 12 individuals were chosen based on meeting the criteria of age, survey score, degree earned, and gender to ensure some level of diversity. There was little ethnic diversity in those who responded to the request to participate from the snowball sampling. Interviews and focus groups were scheduled in a timely manner.

The Researcher's Role

I have worked in Christian education for 35 years as both a teacher and a school administrator in Florida. As a Christian educator I strongly believe that God has given parents

the responsibility to educate their children and train them in the “way they should go” (Proverbs 22:6). Having the privilege of homeschooling my own children, I value the parent-child relationship and have experienced first-hand the influence of parenting practices on my children’s education. Both of my children developed a framework of knowledge that allowed them to make sense of new information in meaningful ways, to think critically, and to analyze and synthesize information. Earning an Associate of Arts degree concurrent with high school graduation, both children were accepted into competitive university programs and now work in the field of business and medicine.

I believe there are parenting practices and values that contribute to a child’s academic success. Observing various parenting styles and practices over the years and witnessing the effect of parental training or lack thereof, I was interested in studying the influence of specific parenting practices common to young graduates of masters and doctoral programs. I began by asking people I know to provide names of potential participants and allowed for a snowball sampling. Therefore, some participants I know directly or indirectly through a third party (classmates of my daughter or son, or friend of a friend).

Data Collection

Data triangulation is a data collection technique that uses multiple sources to facilitate validity and ensure trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). The point of triangulation is to test for consistency among data sources rather than demonstrate consistency (Patton, 2002). Data was collected using a screening survey to identify participants, graduates’ GPA scores, an interview guide with standardized open-ended (Patton, 2002), audio-taped interviews transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist, and focus groups to increase credibility through data triangulation. A three part screening survey was used to gather general demographic information and to identify

participants who shared the common phenomenon of perceiving parenting practices to have fostered their academic success. Part 1A of the survey was adapted with permission from the *High School and Family Partnerships: Surveys for Teachers, Parents, and Students in High School* developed by Epstein, Connors-Tadros, and Salinas (1993) (See Appendix F). This survey is both reliable and valid in measuring parental involvement by parents, teachers and students at the high school level. Questions about parenting practices specific to school related activities were transformed into statements to which participants could respond using a 5 point Likert scale. Part 1B, contains statements adapted from questions on *The National Household Education Survey, Section 2: Family Activities* used by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2012) and helped to identify parent-child interaction (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The last part of the screening survey was composed of demographic questions, which helped ensure participant criteria were met.

Participants were asked to self-report their graduate school GPA on this survey. Feeley, Williams and Wise (2005) found that the GPA was a better predictor of success in graduate school than the GRE. This was an expected outcome of the research based on the fact that a grade point average represents a cumulative score of course work over time whereas the GRE is a less comprehensive one time exam (Feeley, Williams, & Wise, 2005). This view is shared by Fan and Chen (2001) who assert that the “GPA is a more comprehensive indicator of academic achievement than subject-specific indicators” and more reliable than a “composite of multiple measurements” (p. 13).

I used the data from the survey to identify participants and to achieve maximum diversity with regard to educational history, gender, race, and degree earned. This information also served as background information for making contact with participants and breaking the ice. The

participants' self-reported GPA confirms a reasonable level of academic accomplishment. Ten of the participants earned a 3.5 GPA or above, one earned a 3.2, and one earned a 3.0. The survey information also served to unify the participants and the phenomenon being studied.

One hour interviews using open-ended questions were conducted with the 12 graduates of masters and doctoral programs, and a follow-up focus group was approximately an hour and a half. During the interviews participants were asked to describe routine parenting practices related to their home environment, family communication, faith, behavior, attitudes, and skills believed to have fostered academic success. The focus groups provided an opportunity for the researcher to facilitate further discussion on shared experiences identified in the interview process as a means to develop "conversational relation...about the meaning of the experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 66). Discussion of topics related to family practices and sharing stories in a group setting provided additional data to analyze.

Results of the research were written in a way to safeguard the identity of the participants using pseudonyms and slight changes in describing their location (stating these changes in the literature) (IRB, 2014). Consent forms and code sheets were stored separately from data. After the three year retainment period, paper files will be shredded and audio files erased. Until that time, paper files, forms, and audio tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible to the researcher only. Electronic files will be maintained using password protected software on the researcher's computer with security software installed.

Survey

The three part screening survey was used to identify participants for the study. In the first two parts of the survey participants rated statements related to parental involvement and parent-child interaction and communication on the Likert scale of 1-5 with 5 being "strongly

agree.” Examples of statements include: my parent/s read to me often, my parent/s discussed with me how to manage my time, and my parent/s helped me plan for future work and college.

The demographic section of the survey asked participants to provide information related to age, gender, race, form of education (private, public, home study), level of education, field of education, school attended, and GPA. In addition, the survey asked potential participants (graduates of masters and doctoral programs) to identify to what extent they believe their parent’s parenting practices fostered academic success and influenced their worldview.

Interviews

The purpose of interviews in hermeneutical phenomenology is to explore and gather “experiential narrative material” in order to develop “a richer and deeper understanding of the human phenomenon” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 66). Once questions were developed for the interviews and IRB approval was granted, a pilot interview with three “experts” having the shared experience was conducted to confirm the efficacy and clarity of the questions. These “experts” were individuals who met the same criteria of the participants, were familiar with doctoral research methods, and were personally known to the researcher.

Long interviews allowed the researcher to “obtain a comprehensive description of the experience” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 496) and data for coding of recurring themes, cluster of meaning and analysis of significant statements (Creswell, 2011). In an effort to gather concrete information the researcher clarified responses when the participants appeared to lose focus and redirected the question when the participant began to generalize about the topic (Van Manen, 1990). A sample of an interview transcription can be viewed in Appendix G.

Interview questions

1. Tell me about your education. How did you become interested in your area of study?

2. How would you describe your parents' view of learning and education?

Probes: beliefs and expectations, formal/informal/ athletics, extracurricular

3. Describe the extent to which reading was important or practiced in your home.

Probes: daily paper, Bible, type of literature, read aloud as a family, discuss reading

4. Describe family routines or activities you found instructive.

Probes: mealtime, chores, bedtime routine, tell me about the family's table conversation, vacations, attending church

5. Describe how your parents helped you to learn new tasks.

Probes: bike riding, cooking, driving a car, or doing the laundry

6. Tell me how you were motivated by your parents to attain a high level of education?

7. Describe your parents' method of motivating you to success?

8. Describe an experience that would typify the method of communication your parent would most often use.

9. Describe your parents' level of interaction with you when encountering new places, events, or ideas? How did they communicate before, during, and after?

Probes: visiting a museum, visiting the doctor, or grocery store

10. Describe how your parents communicated with you regarding your first job?

Probes: help choosing or getting job, help with application process, hands on, hands-off

11. How would you describe the relationship you have with your parents?

12. Describe the parenting practices or attitude you believe most fostered your academic success?

Probes: discipline, instructional.

13. What was the most important thing your parents imparted to you? How was that accomplished?

Focus Groups

Focus groups provided an opportunity for participants to consider their responses in light of others who share a similar experience and for the researcher to quickly identify common views and experiences (Patton, 2002). Graduates of masters and doctoral programs who view their parents as highly involved and influential in their academic success participated in a focus group using an interview guide (Patton, 2002) moderated by the researcher. This allowed the researcher to clarify comments made in the interview and gave others a chance to confirm common experiences or highlight differences. It also gave the research an opportunity to explore topics not discussed in the interviews related to family culture-specifically family values and traditions. A conference call was conducted for one focus group due to the geographic location of participants.

Focus group questions

1. Describe your bedtime routine under the age of 10.
Probes: reading, storytelling, praying, singing
2. Would you describe your parent/s as an active parent (busy with family activities), instructive parent (purposeful in training), or passive (supportive but not engaged)?
Please elaborate with an example.
3. Describe family traditions related to the holidays and vacations?
Probes: prep for travel, lessons learned
4. What does your family value?

5. What was the glue that held your family together? Tell me about your strong family bond.

Probes: practice of faith, ethnic background

6. Describe an experience that illustrates the instructiveness of your parents.
7. How did faith play a part in your parent's communication and interaction with you?

Probes: discipline, relationships, education aspirations

8. Describe your current interaction/communication with your parent/s?

In addition to the discussion questions above, other questions were asked for clarification such as: do you consider yourself to be a critical thinker, do you consider yourself to be a lifelong learner-how so, and questions clarifying television viewing practices.

Data Analysis

I used content analysis to make sense of the data by taking the content of the interviews and trying to find consistencies and patterns in their responses (Patton, 2002). I read through the transcripts, and labeled meaningful statements with codes for future review. Initially, forty codes were assigned to the data as I worked through the process of analysis. Appendix H shows excerpts from a coded transcription using Atlas.ti software. Codes were then organized into four major themes related to the research questions as follows: *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, *parent-child interaction*, and *parent values*. Each major theme had subthemes assigned to them which are discussed in Chapter Four. Next, I retrieved the quotes from each major theme using Atlas.ti. In many cases the quotes or essence of the quotes given by participants related to more than one theme. Table 2 shows co-occurrences for all codes.

Table 2

Number of Responses by Code and Co-occurrences

Codes	Quotes	Co-occurrences
Critical Thinking	51	92
Educational Approach	50	74
Encouraged Reading	25	42
Extended Learning	41	67
Family Conversation	58	123
Family Recreation	16	26
Family Religion Beliefs	20	30
Family Routines	51	75
Impactful Practices on Ed	65	88
Instruction in the Home	66	95
Learning a new Task	45	53
Methods of Communicating	36	59
Most Important Lesson	27	21
Motivation	60	73
Non-Academic Activities	36	28
Parent-child Interaction	106	175
Parent as Lifelong Learner	35	47
Parent Attitude toward Education	38	69
Parent Expectations	12	23
Parent Expect for College	28	24
Parent Influence	55	77

Parent Post Grad Ed	11	11
Parent Reading	26	39
Parent Support	52	90
Parents Valued Ed	20	23
Parent Work Ethic	24	24
Participant's Post Grad Ed	12	9
Reading Aloud	29	47
Reading Early	16	33
Reading Enjoyment	23	21
Reading Genre	24	36
Reading Importance	17	20
Relationship	54	72
Travel	34	40

The data was analyzed using both inductive analysis whereby I looked for “patterns, themes and interrelationships” and reflexivity (Patton, 2004, p. 41). As part of the inductive analysis, key phrases, practices, and common terms that emerge from the data were defined and categorized. I considered the convergence of data, or how information fit together as well as divergence by exhausting possible categories (Guba, 1978). Reflexivity enters into the “hermeneutical circle of interpretation,” which describes how the researcher views the data by reflecting on the interaction between their own experience and the experience of those they encounter (Patton, 2004). This process required that I be mindful of what I know about the phenomenon and how I know it when analyzing the data (Patton, 2004). It also means reporting the implications of my own perspective (Patton, 2004).

According to Van Manen, (1990), “themes give control and order to our research and writing” (p. 79) and provide a structure for understanding a lived experience. Reflection is part of the analysis process in hermeneutical phenomenology and accomplished by reading through the text and listening to the audio tapes several times (Van Manen, 1990). Reflection was conducive to a selective approach to identifying themes (Van Manen, 1990) and finding statements that revealed parenting practices that fostered academic success for these participants.

Audio-recorded interviews were conducted and digital files sent to a transcriptionist for transcribing verbatim. The transcription documents were loaded into Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. Atlas.ti was used to manage and organize data, allowing for margin-area coding for reoccurring themes within the documents and audio records. Memoing was used to make notes in the programs as well as handwritten notes for organizing data and for both focus groups. Open coding was practiced using Atlas.ti, with codes defined, and assigned to a family code in order to identify and group reoccurring ideas and similarities in perceived parenting practices among the participants. Coding the data helped to identify and focus on the common experiences of the participants and those unique to individual participants. The focus groups were also audio-recorded with notes taken during and after the meetings and analyzed.

In order to describe the essential meaning of the shared experience of participants, I reflected upon the data from both the interviews and focus group, the individuals and their experiences-bringing to that task my own assumptions, experience, worldview, theoretical orientation, and understanding of the phenomenon (Gall et al., 2007; Van Manen, 1990). “Reflective analysis relies primarily on [the] intuition and judgment” of the researcher in evaluating the data (Gall et al., 2007, p. 472). Van Manen (1990) states that this process entails

examining and re-examining the data, and communicating through thick descriptions in narrative and prose.

Reporting the respondent's words in thick description is more about the interpretation of the subtle aspect of the data (meaning, intentions, and motivations) than about recording the details (Schwandt, 2007). Descriptions seek to tell the stories of the participants in order for the reader to understand the emotion, the relationships, and the atmosphere of the home environment. Data was analyzed with both a textural and structural description to develop themes among the participants. A textural description includes writing the "what" of the participants' experience (Creswell, 2013, p. 193) and use precise examples to describe what parenting practices influenced their thinking, learning, behavior, and educational pursuits. A structural description provides the "how" of the participants' experience (Creswell, 2013, p. 194) by describing the setting and context in which participants experienced the influential parenting practices.

The textural and structural descriptions were combined to describe the "essence" of the phenomenon giving the reader a better understanding of how parenting practices may foster academic success. Lastly, as part of this hermeneutical study, an interpretation of the data was used to analyze and describe the phenomenon (Ricoeur & Thompson, 1981). Van Manen (1990, p. 27) states "a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience-is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience." According to Schwandt (2007), reflexivity must be used to critically inspect and identify researcher bias and preference. This process helps to contribute to the validity of the reporting (Schwandt, 2007). As part of the analysis reflexivity was used in discussing my own experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study the following procedures were conducted to ensure credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which a study measures what it is intended to measure. Triangulation, member checking, and researcher's experience were techniques used to ensure credibility. Triangulation of sources by using multiple participant interviews and focus groups contribute to the trustworthiness and credibility of the study (Patton, 2002).

After the interviews and focus groups were transcribed by the transcriptionist, each participant was emailed a copy of the script from their interview and a draft of the findings for member checking (Appendix I). Member checking was used to increase credibility of the findings by asking participants to review the accuracy of the statements, descriptions and summaries (Gall et al., 2007). Participants were asked to clarify any data that misrepresented their experience in order that it could be corrected. Privacy was protected by allowing participants to review and/or withdraw the audio taped interview from the research as a safeguard for consent of information and accuracy of data.

The third provision for credibility was the researcher's background and experience with the phenomenon as a parent of high achieving children and as an educational leader. In addressing concerns of credibility it is necessary for researchers to acknowledge their own preconceptions about and experience with the phenomenon being studied. Reflexivity is the process whereby the researcher is aware of his or her own experience with the phenomenon and how that experience affects his or her understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

Dependability

Dependability refers to whether or not the results of a study are reproducible. In order to increase dependability for future study, details of the design and procedures for data collection are provided for replicating. Providing detailed descriptions of the participants' experience and setting also serves to increase dependability and transferability of this study (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability relates to the external validity of a study, looking at the extent to which the results of a study can be transferred or applied to another. In qualitative research, transferability is not guaranteed or generally achieved due to the small sampling. However, rich, thick descriptions are one way to increase transferability (Creswell, 2013) and were employed in this research. Rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon provide the needed details that contribute to the trustworthiness of the study by providing a concrete view of the experience (Van Manen, 1990).

Confirmability

Peer review was a strategy used for ensuring confirmability (Creswell, 2013). In this process the manuscript was provided to individuals for review and feedback. The reviewer and researcher engaged in discussion about the content and method of research as well as the themes and assumptions made by the researcher.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of this study include securing IRB approval, explaining the purpose of the study to the participants, having participants sign a written consent for the interviews that stated their right to leave the study if they desired, explaining the effort to protect anonymity and confidentiality by using pseudonyms, and the use of reflexivity (Creswell, 2013).

Confidentiality was not assured because of the use of audio recording and focus groups. However, the following steps were taken to do everything possible to safeguard confidentiality. The researcher and transcriptionists upheld confidentiality of subject data by maintaining in strict confidence the names, characteristics, survey results, GPA scores, interview, and incidental comments, and/or other information on all subjects and/or subjects' data (IRB, 2014). Precautionary practices to maintain confidentiality were put in place as early as the interview and included: “substituting codes for names or other personal identifiers, separately storing informed consent forms from survey instruments containing the data itself, properly disposing of computer sheets and other papers, limiting access to identified data, ... and storing research records in locked cabinets” (IRB, 2014, “Confidentiality Statement”).

The researcher and transcriptionists have not discussed nor disclosed participants’ “name or any identifying information or characteristics, scores, ratings, comments, or information about a subject with anyone who is not an authorized member of the research team” to safeguard any association that may identify the participant (IRB, 2014, “Confidentiality Statement”). In addition, the researcher and transcriptionists have not discussed the data in a public location where confidential information could be overheard (IRB, 2014).

Summary

To summarize, the method of this study used a phenomenological approach to research to describe the parenting practices experienced by graduates of masters and doctoral programs identified as having fostered their academic success. The research focused on “what” parenting practices graduates of masters and doctoral programs experienced growing up and “how” those practices impacted their academic achievement (Creswell, 2013). Participants included graduates of masters and doctoral programs, ages 24-31 from the central region of Florida and Virginia who identified themselves through a screening survey as believing their parents to have

been highly influential and involved in their education and learning process. The research explored parental involvement in the family beyond the boundaries of school related activities and assignments, and endeavored to answer the following questions: how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success; in what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral program that fostered their academic success; how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success; and which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success?

Data collection was accomplished through a screening survey, personal interviews, and focus groups to provide triangulation for trustworthiness and credibility (Patton, 2004). Data was analyzed using a software program to help code and organize transcribed interviews by themes. Rich, thick descriptions were used to communicate the phenomenon experienced by participants with textural and structural descriptions to provide for better understanding and meaning (Van Manen, 1990).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The findings in this chapter include a group description as well as individual descriptions of each participant: their age, gender, area of study, form of education growing up, graduate GPA, race, and screening survey score. Table 1 shows the demographic information for all participants. In keeping with the phenomenological design, a narrative follows the brief demographic description of participants, organized thematically, describing emergent themes related to each research question. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings.

Participants

Seven females and five males who participated in the study are described using pseudonyms and the following demographic information: age, birth order, number of siblings, form of education, area of study, degree earned, GPA, parents' education, and the score on the screening survey. Participants fall between the ages of 24 and 31. Eight participants hold a master's degree, four have a doctorate, and three with a master's degree are currently working toward a doctorate. Four attended private schools growing up, three attended public school, and five were educated at home. All participants scored a minimum of 92 on the screening survey indicating an agreement or strong agreement with most of the statements related to their parents' parenting practices. Scores ranged from 92-115, with 115 reflecting a strong agreement with every statement on the survey (with the lowest possible score for someone taking the survey being 23). Ten participants identified themselves as white. Those who identified themselves as "other" were Indian and part Middle Eastern. Table 3 provides the demographic information for each participant using pseudonyms.

Ann

Growing up in a family of five, Ann, a white female age 30, is the middle child with an older brother and younger sister. Ann was primarily homeschooled but participated in the gifted program in the public schools of Pinellas County, Florida in her elementary years and then dual enrolled in college beginning her sophomore year in high school. She enjoyed dance, soccer, and music lessons throughout her school years and often traveled outside the state for dance competitions. Having completed her doctorate in Osteopathic Medicine from a northern university and graduating with a 3.95 GPA, she now works in the ER of a Level 2 trauma center in Florida. Both her parents have completed post graduate work-her mother a Ph.D. and her father an Ed.S.

She describes the family as always being close and always busy with educational activities. She strongly agreed with every statement on the screening survey resulting in the highest possible score of 115 and indicating that her parents were actively and purposefully involved in her learning. Ann expressed a passion for learning which she believes stems from her parents teaching her to see every experience as a learning opportunity.

Cae

The oldest of five children, Cae, now 28, was homeschooled from the age of 6 until she went to college at age 17. Born to a white mother and a Middle Eastern father, she identifies herself as Middle Eastern. Cae has a master's degree in Literary Cultural and Textural Studies from a state university in Florida, graduated with a 4.0 GPA, and is presently working on her doctorate in Rhetoric and Composition. She is married to a primary care physician and cares for their one year old son. Cae's mother holds a bachelor's degree in the field of architecture and

her father is a medical doctor. Cae stated that she was “highly influenced” by her father and husband’s profession in choosing an area of her doctoral research.

Nearly all statements on her screening survey were rated “strongly agree” resulting in a score of 111. The only statement she could only somewhat agree with was as follows: “My parent/s took me to athletic or sporting events outside of school.” She describes her mother and herself as being more interested in the arts and creative activities than in athletic endeavors. Having her father read and tell stories to her at a young age made a lasting impression on Cae and was a practice instrumental in developing her love for fiction and writing.

Davis

Attending public school in Virginia, except for 2 years in private school his 7th and 8th grade years, 31 year old Davis, white, is the oldest son of four children. One brother and a sister also hold master’s degrees and another brother has two bachelor’s degrees which the siblings joke about being an honorary master’s degree. Davis earned a Juris Doctor degree from George Washington University, graduating with a 3.5 GPA. His mother is a Pre-K teacher and his father a medical doctor. Davis scored 101 on the screening survey, agreeing or strongly agreeing with all statements, with the exception of his parents checking to see that homework was completed daily, to which he somewhat agreed. His brother Matt (pseudonym) also participated in this study.

When asked what words he would use to describe his parents’ parenting, Davis said “encouraging and strict,” qualifying *strict* to mean that his parents had high expectations. Davis remembers political conversation at the dinner time and being challenged when making general statements which he believes helped to develop his critical thinking skills.

Elli

The older of two children, Elli is a white female, 31 years old who earned a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from a military university, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. Elli's area of study was influenced by her mother who holds a masters level counselor/therapist license. Her father, who completed a year of study after a bachelor's in media productions is now semi-retired from his own company. Growing up, Elli attended public school in North Carolina. The screening survey indicates that her parents were very involved both at school and at home with a score of 109. She strongly agreed with all but two of the following statements: "My parent/s took me to visit art galleries, museums, or historical sites, which she agreed with, and my parent/s took me to athletic or sporting events outside of school" to which she somewhat agreed. Elli is the wife of Matt, one of the male participants in this study.

When describing her parents, Elli used the word "supportive" frequently. She views her father as very instructive, a man who enjoys sharing information, teaching, and often uses conversation to develop a biblical worldview. Elli described faith as an integrated part of their family culture.

Jo

Jo is the youngest participant, a 24 year old white female, the middle of three children, who attended private school growing up and was recognized for her superior reading ability and motivation for reading in the primary grades. She holds a master's degree in Medical Sciences from a state university in Florida earning a 3.7 GPA, and is presently enrolled in her second year of medical school. Her parents both have completed post graduate education and are practicing attorneys. Jo agreed or strongly agreed with all statements except having a quiet place to work,

parents encouraging her to participate in class, and parents volunteering often at school. The screening survey score for Jo was 102.

One recurring practice in Jo's home was regular family reading and family game time. Even now that the children are grown these activities still take place when they are together. In addition, she often found herself under the tutelage of her father who involved her in his home improvement projects, making sure she understood the historical background of whatever she might encounter at a museum, on a family trip, or what she might be studying in school.

Lee

Twenty five year old Lee, is a white female, the youngest of three children, and the younger sister of Ann. Like her sister, she was homeschooled and participated in classes and activities outside the home. She earned her master's degree in 2012 in Communications and graduated with a 3.2 GPA. Her parents have either a masters or doctorate degree and both teach at a college in Pinellas County. Lee rated her parents as being very involved, agreeing strongly with most of statements with a score of 106. The two statements she only somewhat agreed with were as follows: "My parent/s took me to visit art galleries, museums, or historical sites," and "my parent/s took me to athletic or sporting events outside of school." Lee described her family as close and always involved in learning.

Lin

At the age of 30, Lin, a white female, graduated with a doctorate in Pharmacology from the University of Florida and works for a clinic in the Tampa Bay area. Lin grew up with three supportive parents and attended private school. Her parents were divorced when she was 5, her mother remarrying when she was young. Lin's biological father remained involved and found ways to be present even though he lived in another state. Using a form of online communication,

Lin's father was able to remain active in her life and decision making. Lin is the older of two girls. Her parents all completed post graduate work. Lin's mother and step-father are chemists and run their own business. She earned a 3.0 GPA in graduate school and scored 98 on the screening survey on parental involvement. Lin disagreed with the statements that her parents volunteered often at school and "somewhat agreed" that her parents provided a quiet place and time for studying, and told her stories often. Lin described her parents as encouraging independence while providing the support she needed to be successful.

Matt

Matt, a 29 year old white male, is the second born of four children. He is the brother of Davis, and is married to Elli, also participants in this study. Like his brother, Matt attended public school until college. His mother is a retired teacher, his father a pediatric cardiologist. He holds an MBA from the University of North Carolina and graduated in the top 20% of his class. Matt had a survey score of 109 and strongly agreed with most statements on the screening survey with only one statement marked as "somewhat agree"; "My parents talked about family history or ethnic heritage." He did however, describe his family as having many traditions.

In addition to having a medical degree, his father has an MBA which influenced Matt's decision to earn an MBA. Matt described his father's way of interacting as using guided questions that helped to develop critical thinking skills. When asked about the things imparted to him by his parents, he stated that confidence was the most important.

Nate

Nate is a 31 year old white male, 6 years younger than his only sibling. He holds a master's degree in Music Education from Boston University and is currently working on his doctorate in Music Education. He graduated with a 3.95 GPA and scored 92 on the screening

survey agreeing with more statements than strongly agreeing. One statement that he strongly disagreed with was, “My parents monitored my progress and needs in each subject.” In this regard his parents wanted him to take responsibility for his school work. He disagreed with the statement that his parents took him to athletic or sporting events outside of school.

He attended a private Christian school where his mother was the art teacher for elementary school and he said he received “a very strong influence of Christian faith and a biblical kind of foundation all through my entire schooling.” His father, a mechanical engineer and a professor of AutoCad and drafting has been a strong model for learning new skills. Nate had the unique experience of living on a boat every summer growing up which impacted his education in unconventional ways.

Shayla

Shayla, 31, the youngest and only daughter of three children, grew up in India, attended a private school through high school, completed her undergraduate work there, and then came to America for graduate school. She attended Northwestern University in Chicago, graduating with a 3.8 GPA and earning a master’s degree in Integrated Marketing and Communications. Her mother has a bachelor’s degree and her father a master’s degree in Engineering. Shayla’s rating of parenting practices totaled 92. She disagreed with the following statements: “My parents checked to see that homework was done daily” and “my parent/s helped plan for future work and college.” Although there was discussion regarding these things, Shayla was self-motivated and had a vision for her future.

She strongly agreed that her parents helped to foster her academic success, and believes her parents helped to develop her worldview and critical thinking skills. According to Shayla, her parents made everything about learning, viewing even the most ordinary experiences as an

opportunity to learn and discover new things, meet new people, and better understand different cultures. She and her parents share a mutual respect and love for one another.

Will

Will, a 25 year old white male, is the second oldest of four children with 7 years between the first and second set of siblings. His master's degree is in Creative Writing for Children and Young Adults. He attributes his interest in writing to his father's storytelling and reading as a child. His father holds a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications and has worked as a copywriter. Will's mother holds a bachelor's degree in Child Development and Family Relations and homeschooled the children through middle school. Will also attended a small private school program for homeschoolers which prepared him for early college admissions.

Although he considers his parents to be lifelong learners, he is the only participant without at least one parent having a post graduate degree. Will graduated with a 3.6 GPA from a private university in Minnesota. On the screening survey, Will strongly agreed with seven of the 20 statements, agreed with 11 statements, and somewhat agreed with four of the statements, scoring a 94. Most of the statements he only somewhat agreed with pertained to activities unrelated to school like, "My parent/s helped with projects like building, making or fixing something," "my parent/s played sports, active games, exercised together or went on bike rides," "my parent/s took me to visit art galleries, museums, or historical sites," and "my parent/s took me to athletic or sporting events outside of school."

Zack

The second oldest of a constantly growing family, Zack, a 31 year old white male, grew up with both biological and adopted siblings, with fostered children coming and going. As a biological child in the home, he was homeschooled until he began attending college in high

school. He graduated with a degree in Pharmacology with a 3.56 GPA from the University of Florida. Both his parents have multiple post graduate degrees, all of them earned after starting a family. His parents have both worked in counseling and faith-based non-profit organizations. Zack scored 108 on the screening survey, strongly agreeing with all but four of the statements. One of those statements was having a quiet place and time to study which may be explained by having more than 10 children in the home at a time.

In describing his parents, Zack talked a lot about the influence of his father on his work ethic and educational goals, stating that his father never let him get by with mediocre effort. This, Zack said, applied to throwing a baseball as much as to completing a math assignment.

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonym	M/F	Age	Ed. Type	Degree Earned	GPA	Survey Score	Race
Ann	F	30	Home	Doctorate	3.95	115	White
Cae	F	28	Home	Masters	4.0	111	Middle Eastern
Davis	M	31	Public	Doctorate	3.5	101	White
Elli	F	31	Public	Doctorate	4.0	109	White
Jo	F	24	Private	Masters	3.7	102	White
Lee	F	25	Home	Masters	3.2	106	White
Lin	F	30	Private	Doctorate	3.0	98	White
Matt ^a	M	29	Public	Masters	N/R	109	White
Nate	M	31	Private	Masters	3.95	92	White
Shayla	F	31	Private	Masters	3.8	92	Indian
Will	M	25	Home	Masters	3.6	94	White
Zack	M	31	Home	Doctorate	3.6	108	White

^aGPA was not reported by institution, reported as top 20% of class

Results

Data from the interviews and focus groups were coded for recurring themes resulting in forty codes with responses ranging from three to 106 in frequency. The code with the highest number of responses was Parent-child Interaction (106), followed by Instruction in the Home (66), Impactful Parenting Practice on Education (65), and Motivation to Achieve (60). Appendix I shows a complete list of the codes created in Atlas.ti used for analysis along with the frequency of responses and code meanings. Data was then analyzed and categorized into four major themes as follows: *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, *parent-child interaction*, and *parent values*, with subthemes that help to answer the research questions.

The first major theme was *parent practices* with subthemes that identify the practices as follows: parents are lifelong learners, parents are readers, parents are instructive, and parents provide extended learning. The second major theme was *parent motivators* with subthemes identifying motivators as follows: motivated by parents' work ethic, motivated by the parent-child relationship, motivated by parents' career, and motivated by a love for learning. The third major theme was *parent-child interaction* with subthemes explaining the interaction as follows: interaction is constant, interaction develops critical thinking, and parents communicate support and encouragement. The fourth major theme was *parent values* with subthemes identifying significant values described by participants as follows: faith is valued, togetherness is valued, education is valued, and character is valued.

Table 4 shows how the codes relate to the four major themes, subthemes and research questions. *Parent practices* perceived to fostered academic success addressed the first research question; *parent motivators* addressed the second research question; *parent-child interaction* addressed the third research question; and *parent values* addressed research question four.

Table 4

Major Themes, Subthemes, and Related Codes with Frequency of Code Appearances

Major Themes	Subthemes	Related Codes/Frequency of Appearances
RQ 1: Parent Practices	Parents are Learners Parents are Readers Parents are Instructive Parents Provide Extended Learning	Parents' Post Graduate Education (11) Parent as Lifelong Learner (35) Encouraged Reading (25) Parent Reading (26) Reading Aloud (29) Reading Early (16) Reading Enjoyment (23) Reading Genre (24) Reading Importance (17) Reading with Sibling (30) Educational Approach of Parents (50) Family Routines (51) Impactful Practices on Education (65) Learning a New Task from Parents (45) Instruction in the Home (66) Educational TV in the Home (8) Extended Learning (41) Non Academic Activities (36) Travel Practices (34)
RQ 2: Parent Motivators	Parents' Work Ethic Parent-child Relationship Parents' Career Love for Learning	Motivation to Achieve (60) Parent Influence (55) Parents' Work Ethic (24) Relationship with Parents (54)
RQ 3: Parent-child Interaction	Interaction is Constant Develops Critical Thinking Support and Encouragement	Family Conversation (58) Critical Thinking (51) Parent-child Interaction (106) Family Recreation (16) Methods of Communicating (36) Parent Support (52)
RQ 4: Parent Values	Faith is Valued Togetherness is Valued Education is Valued Character is Valued	Family Religion Beliefs (20) Most Important Lesson from Parents (27) Parent Attitude toward Education (38) Parent Expectations (12) Parents Valued Education (20) Parents' Expectation for College (28) Participant's Post Graduate Education (12)

First Theme: Parent Practices

Parent practices can be defined as actions performed with regularity. To learn about specific practices in the home, participants were asked about the practice of reading and how learning was viewed by parents. Four subthemes emerged from the data related to *parent practices* perceived to have fostered academic success as follows: parents are lifelong learners, parents are readers, parents are instructive, and parents provide extended learning opportunities.

Parents are lifelong learners. One subtheme in the area of *parent practices* included parents being described as lifelong learners, continually learning and growing as individuals. Eleven of the twelve participants had at least one parent with a post graduate degree. Parents' post graduate degrees ranged from master's degree in education, counseling, law, and business to doctorates in medicine and education. Ann and Lee's parents have earned multiple degrees. Their mother with an ABD (all but dissertation) went back to complete her Ph.D. once Ann started college. Ann stated, "She has three masters and the same with my dad... so they instilled in me at a young age that education is very important." Davis and Matt's father has a medical degree and more recently earned an MBA. Both of Jo's parents have Juris Doctorate degrees, Cae's father a doctorate in medicine, and Zack's mother and father both have a master's degree in psychology and his father a doctorate in Computer Science. Nate's father has a master's degree in Mechanical Engineering; both of Lin's parents have a master's degree in Chemical Engineering; Elli's mother has a master's degree in counseling, and Shayla's father has a master's degree in engineering.

All participants described both parents as lifelong learners. The idea of lifelong learners is not limited to the boundaries of academia but rather a continued pursuit of knowledge. The pediatric cardiologist earned an MBA after years of practicing medicine. Taking painting

classes, learning how to garden, learning about race relations, rebuilding cars, and studying a new language were some of the ways participants' parents continue to learn. Cae, whose father is a medical doctor, states emphatically, "My dad was always learning new things. Always! Even if they were recreational, he set the pattern to us as kids, it seemed obvious that yeah, you just keep learning about new stuff the older you get." Matt's father cannot seem to get enough of learning, with a medical degree, and an MBA he teases about getting a law degree. Ann's words reinforce this theme:

My dad started off with a degree in Spanish and then he worked as an accountant and then he went back to school when he was in his 30s to get his degree in school psychology. So there wasn't a -- you know, I do this, I stop and that's it. It was a continuum. Same with my mom. She got her Ph.D. four years ago (personal communication, May 30, 2015).

During the face to face focus group I asked participants if they considered themselves to be lifelong learners as a result of their parents modeling lifelong learning. All participants considered themselves to be lifelong learners with three currently working on a doctorate and others expressing a love for learning in their varied fields or area of interest. Will enjoys researching the psychology of the criminal mind for the purpose of improving his creative writing skills. Cae is "obsessed with world religions," social service issues, and unusual illnesses. She works part time from home as an editor and enjoys learning from the dissertations and research she reviews. Jo "loves documentaries on different cultures and religions" and "loves" research related to social issues.

Parents are readers. Another common practice described by participants and a subtheme to *parent practices* was parents are readers and hence modeled reading in the home.

When asked to describe the extent to which reading was important or practiced in the home all participants described their parents as readers. Lin thoughtfully commented that one of the “most significant learning activities encouraged in the home was reading.” Participants described parents who read aloud to their children when they were young, modeled reading to their children, encouraged reading in a variety of ways, and as a result instilled in their children a love for reading.

Parents read aloud. Parents’ reading aloud to their children was described by all participants as a regular practice. Fondly recounting her early childhood, Ann remembers “as a kid, some of [her] favorite memories,” were of reading *The Boxcar Children*. Zack described parents reading aloud as a continuous practice: “So we read all the time. Before bed every night my dad read a book series called *Character Sketches* to us growing up, so, there was always reading of some variation.” For Matt and Davis, reading was part of their bedtime routine. They also recount that long car rides to Texas meant “mom would just sit in the front seat and read ... for hours at a time.” Will experienced his parents reading to him, but different from the rest, he also enjoyed the storytelling of his father.

Reading occurred at bedtime or for some until participants were reading on their own. Others however, experienced parents reading to them more often and far beyond their early years. Ann has “fond memories” of her mother reading the *Illustrated Classics* to her siblings and her. “My mom ... read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* I still remember being so sad at the very end. I remember those memories of sitting around and having her read to us.... And she had ... *Treasure Island*, she had *Great Expectations*, *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, I mean, you name it, we had a book of it.” Her sister Lee, told the same story adding her favorites to the list: “Even in middle school I remember my mom reading a lot of the classics ... *A Tale of Two*

Cities, Moby Dick, To Kill a Mockingbird.”

Cae’s parents continued reading to her every night before bed through her middle school years when she would listen to her dad read stories to her younger siblings. Sharing a room with her sister, the girls “would stay up at night past when [they] were supposed to be asleep, reading out loud to each other.” Reading aloud was a cherished activity in Cae’s home. Reading in Shayla’s family was an “open” experience that extended into the adult years where family members shared favorite books with each other.

Parents modeled reading. In addition to being read to, all participants described one or more parents who enjoyed reading and modeled reading to them. Jo described the highly valued practice of reading this way:

Family time wasn’t sit in front of the TV. We did a lot of games and reading and both my parents are big readers, so a lot of time when they are sitting at home, everybody would just be sitting around reading or if we weren’t, we would play a game. And that is still true today.... I think my parents wanted us to be young readers and kind of prided themselves on it because they loved to read so much and they wanted us to have that same love of reading. Each of [my parents] probably reads two books a week. That’s their favorite activity, both of them (personal communication, May 29, 2015).

According to participants, parents read anything from fiction for enjoyment to manuals and periodicals related to their field of work. It was not the genre that had the impact but the fact that reading was modeled by parents as a pleasurable and highly valued activity. Elli described her parents’ reading:

[Reading] enjoyment stands out because on vacations my mom disappeared into a book.... My dad has always been a voracious reader ... I would say both educational and

pleasure. He really enjoyed reading about handy-man work ... but he also reads scholarly [material and] is very into biblical reading (personal communication, December 17, 2015).

Ann and Lee also described their father as “an avid reader” and “history buff.” Ann laughed about him taking his Kindle to church in case he had a “couple extra minutes” for reading. Zack’s “dad always had his nose in some book,” and adds that his mother “was always reading” too. According to Cae, her mother “loved reading and she always pointed out the fact that she kept a dictionary with her at all times because if she didn’t know what a word was, she would look it up. Then she would put a list of words at the back of the book that she learned.”

Although Davis did not recall actually seeing his parents read there was confirmation that it occurred. “I don’t know that I necessarily saw them reading a lot, I think when they read, they were reading to us, but certainly the evidence of it was there in terms of books in their bedroom and the large collection of adult fiction and non-fiction that they had” (personal communication, December 15, 2015).

Parents encouraged reading. Encouraging reading was a parenting practice described by all the participants. Encouragement came in the form of providing books in the home, taking trips to the library or bookstore, suggesting that their children read, and rewarding reading or activities related to reading. Lin’s mother read to her often when she was young and viewed reading as the default activity. Lin read classics and “good literature” instead of watching television or playing video games. Any free time was met with an imperative statement from mom to “go get a book” and Lin declared, “I always loved to read, and my sister did too.” She remembers trips to the bookstore with her mom to “pick some sort of book ... that was learning and fun to read,” and visits to the local library.

Nine participants described parents encouraging them to read by visiting the library or providing books in the home. Cae loved the “no limit” rule to the number of books that could be checked out on their regular library excursions when she was little. Cae explains:

I know my mom would take us to the library like once a week. It was pretty much a once a week practice to go to the library and I loved picture books ... we were allowed to pick out as many picture books as we wanted every week.... There was no limit (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Going to the bookstore and the library were “very much a part of life” in Shayla’s family as well. Matt reported, “[reading] was definitely a big part of our early childhood and I remember when I was able to read, my mom would drop us off at the library and – it was certainly emphasized throughout that period to being a teenager.” His brother Davis recalls being “encouraged regularly” to ride his bike to the “library not too far” from the house. Elli’s parents took her to the library regularly too, “especially in the summer... we were encouraged to read anything we enjoyed.”

Children enjoy reading. The *parents’ practice* of reading, of modeling and encouraging reading had a profound effect on participants’ enjoyment of reading, and participants implicitly or explicitly referenced the impact of this practice on their academic success. Matt expressed a revelation regarding his love for reading:

I really enjoy reading now and getting books, especially when we are on vacation and just sitting on the beach and reading for a few hours at a time. I would imagine that is, as I think of it, that is a trait that is really what my parents do. I had never really made that connection in my mind, but if I think about it for a second, [their reading] probably is

pretty directly correlated to [my enjoyment of reading] (personal communication Dec. 15, 2015).

Seven of the participants used words like “I loved to read,” “reading was fun,” “reading was cool” in describing their connection to reading at a young age. Jo’s enthusiasm for reading is illustrated in this story:

My idea of like, sneaking around behind my parents’ back was staying up and under my covers reading my book with my book light. I think my proudest moment in elementary school was my teacher ... when I was on the Nancy Drew kick,... [gave me] the Accelerated Reading test and I got more points than anyone ever had gotten in the school and she took me to the middle school and she said, ‘See this, a 2nd grader can do it, why can’t you get all these points?’ And I was like, ‘I’m awesome’ (personal communication, May 29, 2015).

Cae describes a fond memory which sparked her love for books:

When I was five, my dad started reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* to me every night ... I [would] usually go sit on the floor next to my dad’s bed and he would lay in bed and read while I was laying in like a sleeping bag on the floor. I have very specific memories of that. So he read through those books and I loved those books. I feel like that is really when I started to be obsessed with stories as opposed to just picture books (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

A self-proclaimed “bookworm,” Shayla declared, “I love reading” and like Jo was often told to “go to bed, you need to stop reading.” Nate did not express quite the same enthusiasm toward reading as Shayla and others but like his mother who “enjoyed reading books that were more based around religion and philosophy of religion and faith-based kind of books,” he

“learned through reading and enjoyed particular aspects of philosophy and religion.” In discussing their enjoyment of reading eight participants mentioned their amusement with series like the Babysitter Club, Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, the Illustrated Classics, Boxcar Children and Choose Your Own Adventure books, with perhaps the most advanced series being read at age six by Zack who “read the Frank Peretti books” as his first major fiction.

Parents are instructive. In addition to describing parents as readers, participants described parents as instructive—a subtheme related to *parent practices*. In describing parenting practices perceived to have fostered their academic success and impact their learning, participants described parents as individuals who were purposeful about training or teaching their children. Whether teaching life skills or developing critical thinking skills the descriptions given depicted parents with an unspoken philosophy that life is full of learning opportunities and they acted on those beliefs in their interactions with their children. Participants were asked to describe family routines or activities they found instructive, and describe how their parents helped them to learn a new task. Interviewees’ responses indicated that their parents were instructive and actively involved in helping their children better understand their world.

In coding the data, I made two distinctions in parents’ educational approach. First, I identified the educational approach referring to the method parents chose to educate their children. What type education did parents choose for their children—home, private or public education? In this study, five participants were homeschooled, three attended public school, and four attended private schools. All participants educated at home also experienced varied levels of traditional education. As homeschoolers, Ann and Lee were both involved in gifted programs offered in the public schools. Ann, Cae, Lee, Zack and Will all experienced taking classes at a private school for homeschoolers and dual enrolled in a local college during their high school

years. The diversity in the educational background of participants provided a multifaceted perspective.

The other distinction made in coding, regarding the educational approach by parents, was the implicit educational philosophy of the parents. Is education and learning something that took place in the confines of the school building, at the kitchen table completing homework, or out in the world where one learns from the ideas of people, places, events, activities, or by building and creating? Were parents purposeful in teaching? Were parents proactive in instruction? In determining the educational approach of the parents the answers to questions like: tell me about your education, how would you describe your parents' view of learning and education and describe family routines or activities that you found instructive were further analyzed. The answers to these questions illustrated that parents of these participants were instructive.

Instruction in the home. All participants described education in their home as a regular occurrence. Participants' parents approached education as something that far exceeded the confines of traditional education or classroom learning. Learning was a part of their family culture. Philosophically, the educational approach was similar but each family valued and practiced different methods of discovery. Shayla described her parents as "present and proactive" explaining that her parents were involved with her learning and proactive in teaching and discussing whatever environment or surrounding she found herself a part of. Nate shared a similar experience to Lin who described parents "as approaching education as self-discovery-giving opportunity for learning, accepting of failure and encouraging progress."

Parents approached education as an ongoing activity, looking for teaching opportunities in ordinary tasks or creating opportunities for experiencing something new. The philosophical approach to learning that views every experience as educational was seen in the story Ann told.

She chuckled, “If there was roadkill on the side of the road, we’d stop and [discover]... there’s the heart, there’s the brain... so it turned into a learning situation.” When describing the instructive nature of her parents, Jo said her dad liked “to share his wealth of knowledge with everyone” especially when it came to an “event or piece of history.” Her mother was a “pointer-outer” pointing out a sign to read, a menu to critic, or presidents and states to be learned from the placemats. Shayla also described parents who were instructive and exposed her to a variety of learning opportunities. Art galleries, museums, and concerts were some of the activities the family would engage in on a regular basis.

When asked to describe parenting practices when learning a new task, participants reported whether a fraction problem, learning to read, riding a bike, or fixing the plumbing, that teaching included modeling, direct instruction when needed, guided practice, independent performance, and support and encouragement. Sometimes it included hands-on learning. This meant that trial and error were a part of the learning process, an opportunity as Davis stated “to figure it out on your own.” Davis went on to describe parents asking “a lot of questions as to how things were going” monitoring him, offering support, and expressing faith in his ability. Ann mentioned her mother would explain the process and “broke it down into analytical steps.” Zack and Cae shared another way of approaching instruction, by describing parents pointing them to the library and books to “reason through it.” Regardless of the approach, conversation was a common theme among participants who described it as a consistent practice.

Participants with instructive parents created a learning culture. In describing activities in the home that participants found instructive, interviewees revealed an instructive nature to one or more parents who enjoyed engaging their children in the learning process. Learning activities described by participants were not related to school learning but rather life skills, places or

events of interest and often involved modeling. Nate described the instruction from his dad as being less about academics and “more lifelong learning and things in the real world setting.” Because his “dad was a huge mechanic,” he and his dad “rebuilt a few cars together” when Nate was in high school; a skill Nate is grateful for today.

It was ordinary things that created a culture of learning in the home. Zack said, “My dad constantly was driving us into conversation over his computer codes or his latest psychology reading for that master’s degree back then ... There was a lot of discussion.” Additionally, Cae reported how learning took place in her home:

[Dad] allowed patients to come to the house and he did active, minor surgery at our house a lot of the time. And we got to help. So that was a really, really, really good hands on experience. Obviously it shaped our perception of bodily functions and human interaction with the body and we aren’t squeamish in any way or—um and it fostered interest and then exploring through television programs. Like even adult things like the Discovery Channel, things about the body and science and biology in general (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

At Ann and Lee’s house, the kitchen doubled as a science lab. Ann, amused by the memory, reported that the table was used for dissecting a sheep’s brain and other animals followed directly by dinner. Counting chicken nuggets at a restaurant when eating out, learning how to handle money, managing chores, and learning to play golf were examples of the diverse learning that took place in Lin’s home. When it came to learning new skills her parents were an active part of the process. Lin described the instructional nature of her mother:

She always tried to have something that was for a purpose whether it was reading something that was like classical literature versus modern fiction, [or] computer software

to help with language learning... she was always to me an instructional person (personal communication, May 27, 2015).

Instruction from parents was proactive and took place in the home, in the car, or at the grocery store. In Ann and Lee's family, learning occurred all day long. To illustrate this Lee recalled learning from every day experiences:

We would go to the store ... we would find out what the best [price of] yogurt was by calculating unit price right there. We would have a math lesson right there... there was always something to be learned in everything that we did (personal communication, May 30, 2015).

Many parents were instructive in life management skills like home repairs, car mechanics, and cooking or instruction was born out of the family life style. Davis experienced instruction from his parents in the chores and home repairs around the house. Rather than call a repairman, Davis's father was more inclined to "fix [repairs] himself" and involved Davis in the process. He reported, "There was instruction involved with the various repairs that needed to be done around the house." Davis was encouraged to read the "manual to learn how to do something." This included cookbooks even when his mom knew the recipe. Cooking and baking were skills he learned from his mother. He laughed, and remembering the awe of his friends stated, "I recall in middle school and high school being the only one of my friends who was capable of even cooking a hamburger."

Eight participants mentioned their father teaching them life skills by modeling and demonstration. *Modeling* is a word Nate used to describe how he learned from his father. He watched his dad build houses and when he could "started to help with some of the duties ... like, plumbing and electrical." Nate mentioned modeling as the most impactful practice on his

academic success stating that he spent a great deal of time observing his parents, especially his father. Others also described instructive fathers. Jo learned how to use electric tools under the tutelage of her father. Likewise, Lee and Ann's father taught them practical skills like "helping learn how to change doorknobs in the house, fix toilets,... and little things about cars" including how to drive an "old stick shift truck."

Parents provide extended learning opportunities. The last subtheme associated with *parent practices* was parents provide extended learning opportunities for their children which broaden their education. In all cases the participants in this study described extended learning opportunities such as sports, dance, scouts, piano and other music lessons, summer camps, art lessons, knitting lesson, visiting historical sites or museums, music performances, boating, helping in a soup kitchen, missions trips, and traveling as common activities in the family.

Nate reflected with gratitude the learning that occurred with his family "outside of school." "We were huge sailors ... and learned a lot through our experiences [living] on the boat." This experience showcased the value Nate's parents placed on learning in a less structured manner "learning how to meet and socialize with people from different cultures and backgrounds." Davis's parents believed "there was educational and growth value" to the Boy Scouts and Davis was "very intensely involved" through his 16th birthday when he made Eagle Scout with the encouragement and involvement of his father.

For Cae "everything was instructive, honestly":

We did music -- we were all allowed to do music, sports, and art lessons. We all learned how to paint in watercolor, pastel, oil. We learned how to draw. We took dance, we did basketball. My brothers did baseball and soccer. I want to say my sister did Tae Kwon Do. I mean it's endless ... another instructive thing was that my parents -- we lived in a

neighborhood with a ton of kids ... And my parents really, really encouraged and welcomed other kids into the home and allowed us to play constructive play.... So a lot of pretending/real life, surviving on deserted islands, which is based on my readings of things like *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. So then based on those books, I created a very defined world with parameters in which people had to operate to survive ... So that was educational play, instructive, which again, was facilitated by both the location, but also what I had been reading and my parents encouraging that (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Even when it came to television, parents made choices that had educational consequences and functioned as extended learning. Common among the participants was the practice of parents limiting their television viewing and screen time on electronic devices which was, “very, very tight and strictly enforced” in Matt and Davis’ home. Often the acceptable television programming was educational shows. Cae remembered “lots of television that was highly educational.” Shows like *Wishbone*, *Sesame Street*, *Mr. Rogers*, *Bill Nye*, *Beakman’s World*, *Magic School Bus* and the all-time favorite *Reading Rainbow* were mentioned by all participants as the type of shows they enjoyed watching. Cae was adamant in stating, “I would say *Reading Rainbow* was the other number one influence on me for reading.” Elli “loved *Reading Rainbow*” as well. For Matt and Davis, educational television was encouraged and “didn’t count as screen time.” Lee and Ann watched political shows or educational television as they got older. Nate was the only one in the focus groups who did not have limits on the type of show or viewing time but stated he was “too busy playing outside” and doing other things to be concerned much with television.

Music. Parents provided extended learning opportunities through music. All but one

participant played some kind of instrument growing up. Seven participants took piano lessons, two additional participants took accordion and all played at least one other instrument other than piano. Flute, trumpet, trombone, drums, and violin were some instruments that were mentioned. Singing was also a part of the home for several participants. Elli described the culture of her home having “a whole lots of singing, structured and unstructured... a lot of music, piano, guitar, singing, drums.”

Travel. Traveling was another extended learning opportunity participants described as an instructive family routine practiced by their parents. All participants experienced traveling as they were growing up; seven took regular vacations, often returning to the same place each year. Others made trips to visit family in another state or traveled out of the country. Three participants shared a family tradition of taking a special trip at a specific age. At age 10, the children in Jo’s family took a trip with one parent. Jo’s trip was to Chicago to see the American Girl Museum. In Lee’s family, when the children turned 16 years old, their birthday gift was choosing a trip for the family to take. When the five children in Cae’s family each graduated from high school, mom and dad took them individually to a “destination of their choice.” Cae chose England. In the focus group, Cae also described yearly trips to North Carolina and a trip to Lebanon “to see family... and historical sites.”

Reading in preparation for the trip was a common experience among participants. Ann and Lee traveled “all over the United States” for clogging competitions and competed nationally in synchronized swimming. Their family would have “time of study ahead of time to learn about the area” they would visit. For example, instruction might include reading about the history of the state or city, learning about the vegetation or visiting an special exhibit like the “Hunley

submarine that sunk during the Civil War” when visiting South Carolina. Cae recalled details of a trip to DC:

When we went to Washington D.C. once for my dad to do a medical conference, obviously it was a huge week long field trip to all the historical sites, but then [my mother] also read us the biographies of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington on the trip, at the hotel room when we weren’t doing site studies (personal communication, June 4, 2015)

Since both of Nate’s parents were educators, they did a lot of traveling during the summer. According to Nate they “were always traveling,” admitting that he and his father did not “sit still very well” and his mother “loved to travel.” Nate’s summer learning was replete with travel:

There was a lot of talking throughout the trip about what we were experiencing. After many years of sailing for two months, we ended up buying an RV and traveled the entire United States in an RV, which really presented a lot of interesting experiences as well as visiting like, every single National Park in the United States. We would go and then learn about wherever we were at that point in time. We went to the Grand Canyon. We would learn while we were there. If we went on a horseback ride, the guide would tell us everything -- and then we as a family would talk about it afterwards (personal communication, November 14, 2015).

Although Jo’s travel included aspects of education and learning, after listening to others in the focus group, she stated her regret that her experiences were less informative than those described by others. For example, of the many trips Cae has taken she described a two week trip with her father to Mexico at the age of 12 making a “huge impact” on her understanding of the

world, coming to the “realization that the world, the norms that surround you are not norms, they are contextual... Not everyone has food in a grocery store ... not everyone has a government that looks this way or health care.” She went on to say that you “can read about different cultures and see them on the internet but it’s not the same as being there and experiencing different cultures. Nothing can compare with physically standing in the place where thousands of years ago people created the alphabet.”

Nate told the focus group that “every moment that we had we were traveling. Even on weekends we were gone... We were never at home unless it was Monday through Friday.” He expressed that traveling helped him to be open to new experiences and to diversity. Nate declared, “When you travel you experience multiple cultures, you experience diversity beyond what your social cultural world is in the five mile radius of the house that you grew up in.”

The findings reported as *parent practices* with its subthemes—parents are lifelong learners, parents are readers, parents are instructive and parents provide extended learning opportunities—helped to answer the first research question, “how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents they perceived to have fostered academic success?”

Second Theme: Parent Motivators

Parent motivators were parents’ actions, attitudes or behaviors that participants described as motivating them to success. Four subthemes emerged from the data related to *parent motivators* participants describes as fostering their academic success as follows: motivated by parents’ work ethic, motivated by the parent-child relationship, motivated by parents’ career and example, and motivated by a love for learning.

Motivated by parents' work ethic. Through the interview process I wanted to better understand how participants were motivated by their parents to attain a high level of education and asked them to describe their parents' method of motivating them to succeed academically. A common theme among the responses was the example set by parents to work hard. As lifelong learners and hardworking individuals themselves, parents modeled achievement and a strong work ethic for their children.

Developing a strong work ethic was a *parental motivator* described as part of the family culture. For Matt "it wasn't that we had to be the best, but we had to do our best, so it wasn't okay for me to pick easier classes to get good grades I had to take the classes that challenged me and made me work harder." Lin believes it was her parents' work ethic that motivated her to attain a high level of education. She stated that her parents had set a bar and working hard was required for reaching the end goal. Lin recalled, "We'd talk about what I needed to get to where I wanted to be and, for me, I saw [that] I had to stay in school to get the degrees to get where I wanted to be."

"A strong work ethic" and a need to "live up to my potential, to serve God the best that I can serve" were instilled in Ann. Her father worked "three jobs or more" as she was growing up and she observed the example of her mother who worked at home, made sure the children were well educated, provided extended learning opportunities for them, and was actively involved with community organizations. As a result, Ann knew to reach her potential meant "higher education and really succeeding that way." Growing up in the same home as Ann, Lee remembered listening to the personal stories of her parents' journey and witnessed their hard work in getting there. Lee stated, "Seeing positive results from both their hard work and level of education motivated me to want to succeed," adding "they instilled in me that if you worked

hard, you know, good things will come.”

Matt explained the extent to which he benefited from his parents’ hard work:

It was certainly apparent how hard both of my parents worked, whether it was my dad being in the office and working on grants when he was at home and having to dedicate time to working really hard at his job and doing his best or if it was just the amount of effort my mom put into everything outside of that, whether it was volunteering with the school or helping us do projects or getting us involved in as many things as possible and chauffeuring us all around town to make sure that we could be involved in all those things (personal communication, December 15, 2015).

Motivated by his parents’ work ethic, Will learned to do his school work or other tasks “right the first time” and learned “what it meant to work hard.” He continued, “Seeing them do things helped me get a baseline for what it meant to be an adult”. In the interview, Elli described both her parents as “extreme perfectionists” with “very high work ethics. She said they take “pride in a job well done” and are “both extremely hard working and driven.”

Motivated by the parent-child relationship. Participants were also motivated to achieve by the parent-child relationship and their desire to please their parents. In describing the family culture and the relationship they had with their parents, all participants described it as supportive and encouraging, causing them to feel cared for and loved. This relationship was the impetus for working hard and a driving force in wanting to please their parents making the parent-child relationship a *parental motivator*. Participants were motivated by this relationship to succeed in their academic endeavors. Zack fervently said, “I have a wonderful relationship with my parents. I couldn’t be successful in life without their constant sowing into my life, educationally, [and] spiritually.”

Participants also used words such as *warm, loving, supportive, encouraging, very close, close-knit,* and *respectful* in describing the relationship with their parents. Shayla respectfully added the connection she shared with her parents was “open, trusting, loving, and definitely accepting and non-judgmental.” Furthermore, participants described parents as having high but reasonable expectations, or being firm but approachable and open. Deliberate in her description, Elli described her parents this way: “They are certainly authoritative parents, they are incredibly warm, but you also knew there was a limit.”

Five participants highlighted some aspect of the parent-child relationship as being most impactful. Support and encouragement were *parent motivators* that both Ann and Matt described as being most important to their academic success. Ann acknowledged, “The constant support and motivation that my parents provided when it came to education was the most important practice.” Elli’s pointed to the warm relationship with her parents, the respect she had for their authority, and the grace her parents extended as having most affected her academic success:

The most important thing they imparted to me [was a] sense of worth outside of anything I do. Like, just who I am is worthy and loveable and if I do other things wonderful and they will be proud of that and they are excited about that, but there is worth just in the relationship (personal communication, December 17, 2015).

Elli went on to say, “I never felt with my parents that I needed to be perfect.” If she “messed up” she knew there would be forgiveness and encouragement to try again. Affectionately, Elli added that the relationship “engendered...a strong desire to make [her parents] happy.”

The most important thing described by Davis that was imparted to him was an expressed confidence in his ability to succeed—the idea that he “could do it”:

I think kind of hand-in-hand with the fact that this was -- you were going to go to college, ... the fact that you could do it and the encouragement ... And the genuine happiness ... when you did succeed. I remember very distinctly how thrilled they were when I got early admission to my first choice for college. So I think just that kind of combination of, this will happen and you can do it (personal communication, December 15, 2015).

In the same way that praise and pleasing their parents motivated them to succeed, the possibility of disappointing their parents was also described as a motivator. When talking about academic achievement, Davis stated that it was an expectation-“something that was going to happen” and “not wanting to fail” and let his mother down, “if only because it would result in a quiet sigh and look of disappointment, which was a powerful motivation for myself and my siblings.” He added that because of their investment in his education, his future in general, and “their genuine happiness when you succeeded and my mother’s disappointment when you didn’t, just made you want to succeed.”

Participants expressed having the kind of relationship with their parents that motivated them to succeed to make them proud and not disappoint them. Lin is one who directly stated that “not wanting to let [her] parents down ... was a big push for me.” Realizing the “sacrifices” his parents made for him, Will not only wanted their approval in what he was doing but also wanted them to be proud of his accomplishments. In referring to the sacrifices they made he remembered:

My mom telling us that the cost for my dad to go to Starbucks once a day in the morning for coffee was the exact same cost that it was for Josh and I to go to Grace Academy (pseudonyms) and I didn’t want to disappoint them (personal communication, January 4, 2015).

Lin was influenced by her desire to please her parents as well. Motivated to achieve in school was in large part due to Lin's close relationship with her parents. She identified her parents as having set expectations and standards while being supportive and encouraging, and stated, "I didn't want to let them down....you want them to be proud with what you did." Boundaries, support, encouragement, respect, and love were a part of the family culture implicitly and explicitly described by all participants to have fostered their academic success.

Not only did all the participants describe their parents as supportive growing up, but they also continue to enjoy that same level of support as adults today. Nate shared that his parents were an "integral part" of his first homes, helping to gut and renovate them. All participants would agree with Nate's statement that his parents "are very much still a part of our lives and we see them often and talk with them often on the phone or texting." All described the current relationship with their parents as more like collaborative friends. All continue to talk frequently, multiple times a week, seeking their counsel, and enjoying a relationship of mutual respect.

Motivated by parents' career and example. Participants identified their parents' career choices and example as a *parental motivator* for wanting to achieve. Six of the participants were influenced by their parents' field of study in choosing their own. Participants observed the lifestyle and rewards of pharmacy, business, writing, psychology, and teaching. Elli stated, "My mother is a licensed professional therapist and I'm sure that in some way impacted my decision because I saw what she did and appreciated that." Both Nate's parents were teachers and he was influenced by "seeing not only their lifestyle" of having summers together but also "their passions for what they did." While not influenced directly to pursue the field of education, Nate was greatly encouraged to develop a love for music and play an instrument which ultimately ended in his having a career in music education. Observing his father's work in higher

education, the schedule and the freedom it offered, inspired Nate “to gradually work that way.” Growing up Will loved hearing his dad tell stories and “wanted to be like [his] dad.” This experience “pushed” him “toward studying stories, studying English, primarily in fiction and then studying the craft of writing.” He added that his father’s “thumbprint is right there” referring to his father’s influence on where Will is today.

Motivated by a love for learning. In response to how parents motivated participants to attain a high level of education, participants described other parenting practices that motivated or influenced their pursuit of academic success. Cae gave an illustration of how her parents directed her path:

[My dad] threw adult literature at me starting at about age 7 or 8. And he also encouraged me to begin writing personally -- journals, when I was 7. So I actually started writing memoir style writing at age 7 and I truly -- looking back, I believe that was the key to developing my writing skills. Because now I’m not primarily a literary scholar, I’m a writer (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Another *parental motivator* was parents imparting a love for learning. Cae described both her parents as “naturally gifted in teaching” who enjoyed teaching other children as well as their own. Cae developed a love for learning through the exploratory, investigative learning culture of her home. She was fervent in sharing:

I think they made education fun, so fun and exploring things so fun, and they encouraged us to explore, question, and learn. So if they hadn’t encouraged us to question things and investigate and research on our own -- because that was something we liked [it] became part of our daily life. So, because that was part of daily life, it just seemed natural to keep investigating (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Eleven participants mentioned an intrinsic motivation as part of what motivated them as they got older, in addition to the parent-child relationship of their younger years. Parents' work ethic, the parent-child relationship, the parents' career and example, and the parents instilling a love of the learning were described by participants as *parent motivators* for their academic success and helped to answer the second research question, "in what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success"?

Third Theme: Parent-child Interaction

In order to learn more about the *parent-child interaction* of the participants, interview questions were asked regarding their method of communication, the level of interaction when encountering new places, events or ideas, and communication centered around a specific event like their first job or applying for college. In describing the *parent-child interaction* three subthemes emerged from the data as follows: interaction is constant, interaction develops critical thinking, and parents communicate support and encouragement.

Interaction is constant. In analyzing the data on *parent-child interaction* the most pervasive theme was that interaction was a constant in the families of these participants. Several questions were asked during the interview to better understand how and when parents communicated and interacted with their children. The magnitude of interaction is not surprising given that *parent practices* (parents are lifelong learners, parents are readers, and parents are instructive), and *parent motivators* reveal the extent to which parents communicated with their children. Therefore, it follows that participants described the *parent-child interaction* as a constant practice. Eight participants used words like "constant interaction," "lots of conversation," and "lots of talking" when asked to describe how parents communicated with

them in everyday situations. Ann added that in her family there was always “discussions about anything and everything.” Zack described his father as “always faithful at the end of the evening, [to] sit down individually with each child” to find out about their day, address any attitude needing correction, or reinforce “whatever we learned throughout the day with Mom.”

Participants described a high level of interaction with their parents when encountering new places, events, or ideas. They reported spending a great deal of time interacting in everyday activities as well. When asked to describe the routine interactions related to dinner time, family travel, or playing games together, participants had similar experiences. Playing games or enjoying family recreation was a practice participants cited as interactive. For some participants, games were integrated into daily activities. For others, a family game or movie night was common. Although Jo’s family played “fast thinking games” that more often than not involved family competition, five of the participants in the face to face focus group reported that family competition was discouraged since the result was not positive for the family. Competitiveness was reserved for team sports or other non-family activities for those individuals. When it came to traveling, eight participants had one or more parents reading beforehand and discussing with the children things they might experience or see as well as instructing during the trip.

Not only did I want to know if the families spent time together but also how they interacted when spending time together. Was the interaction instructive? Participants talked about visiting museums and reading exhibit plaques with their parents. Ann recalled visiting the traveling Titanic exhibit, studying about it in advance, and then discussing the history and ethics involved in the tragic event. All participants interacted with their parents about their college and career decisions with interaction ranging from support in the application and interview process to having help creating a list of pros and cons.

A high level of interaction with his father existed over Zack's field of study and what his education meant for his future. Zack described his father as patient in his interactions but purposeful in helping Zack to see that "the most important aspect of education" was how it would allow him to provide for the family. Jo's parents kept up on her educational pursuits and have encouraged her "every step of the way." For undergraduate school, Elli and her parents looked at the "pros and cons of different schools." Matt and his dad interacted regarding their shared career interest "because we both have MBAs he's always talking about, learning how to be a better manager or learning how to develop business better or what new things he's going to do beyond his day-to-day job."

Participants implicitly described the *parent-child interaction* as supportive or helpful- not demeaning, patronizing, or dismissive. Lin put it in terms of being treated like a "real person." When asked to describe an experience that would typify the method of communication her parents would use most often, Cae, trying to find the right words, made the statement that her parents "didn't change their vocabulary" for their children. Cae continued, "They always spoke to us assuming we understood...They raised the bar and expected us to get up to it." She remembered this because other adults would take notice and comment on words that she would use. Cae specifically recalled using the word "antagonizing" when she was very young which puzzled the mother of her friend. Likewise, Ann and Lee stated that their parents never wanted to "dumb down their speaking" when they communicated or interacted with their children. Ann laughed when she illustrated this with an "embarrassing story" about not knowing words like "pee" because they were taught to use the word "void."

All participants described an open line of communication to their parents and described their parents as being available. Jo said, "My mom is a very open, very open communicator in

terms of the day to day. We talk about everything.” Having open communication was a description echoed by seven other participants. Cae stated enthusiastically that her parents communicated “abundantly. Everything was definitely analyzed and explained more rather than less.” When asked to give an example that would typify the method of communication, Cae shared that when looking for a job, her father discussed the financial wisdom of using her talents and working for the highest wage possible, by marketing her own skills (like piano lessons or babysitting) which would garner more income rather than working in a restaurant for minimum wage. This exercise illustrates not only the depth of the conversation with her father, but also the interest in helping her think through a broader perspective on a topic.

Eating together was an important part of the day and a time when family members were able to discuss issues of significance, laugh together, or encourage someone in the family. Ten participants indicated that family conversation was a vital part of the family culture and that conversation occurred regularly around the dinner table. Storytelling was part of the mealtime experience and children enjoyed listening to their parents’ tales about things going on at work. Sometimes those discussions would lead to in-depth conversation and questioning of family values and beliefs. Will’s dinner time experience was “lots of discourse and chatting and goofing off” and stated that the “ritual of sitting around the table, of praying and eating and talking” made his “family feel more like a unit” than his wife’s family who did not experience eating meals together on a routine basis.

Jo’s parents (both attorneys), would talk about the cases they were working on and interacted with the children about their day. Cae expressed that her father’s stories about his work day was her “favorite part of mealtime.” Shayla remembered that dinner conversation was a time when “parents were always very encouraging.”

Interaction develops critical thinking skills. Emerging from the data related to *parent-child interaction* was the idea that the constant engagement with their children according to all the participants helped to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. Asking questions, seeking to understand the child, and helping the child to understand their world was a part of this process. When asked to describe parenting practices that fostered the development of critical thinking participants answered in a variety of ways. Ann described the practice of integrating subjects in school to help make connections to relevant information and develop critical thinking skills. Interaction leading to critical thought was generated by a topic discussed at the dinner table or spawned as the result of a narrative in a book or movie that challenged the child to think through their actions and defend their assumptions.

All participants shared Ann's sentiment that mealtime was a time for the family to interact and "talk about [the] day and just grow close as a family." In addition to family events and activities, table conversation also related to current events, family values, worldview, and in some cases, politics as the children got older. These conversations were viewed as having helped develop critical thinking skills. Davis described how family dinner conversation helped to develop his critical thinking skills and motivated him to better defend his statements.

We ended up having lots of political discussions.... A lot of it was briefly informed thought by myself or one of my siblings who had perhaps in passing and seeing the newspaper in the morning or a *Time* magazine or something, read one line, one article or a line of an article or something and decided that we were now authoritative experts on the subject.... Generally it would start with myself or my sister, the two of us in particular taking an absolute stance on a position, being questioned as to why we would possibly think that and then just kind of being picked at as we refused to concede any

point, basically. And so certainly that would fall very much into the method of being questioned... I think the fact that politics and whatever other hot topics, again, would happen to be in the local newspaper or magazines was discussed, certainly made me want to become more expert in the areas that I was talking about so that I wasn't backed into these corners and that I could defend my position (personal communication, December 15, 2015).

Critical thinking might have been facilitated with a discussion, by challenging the thinking of someone in the family, or centered on finding solutions to a problem. Cae described dinner conversation that stimulated her thinking this way: "What I remember [is my dad] telling stories about how the office was running or how he interacted with patients or weird, bizarre phenomenon that he saw and how he figured it out." She goes on to recount another experience that made a lasting impression and developed analytical thought:

So television -- the other thing that helped develop critical thinking that I very distinctly remember from an extremely young age. Actually, this is in the top list of why I also pursued higher education. Starting... I remember being like five ... my parents let me watch things like Indiana Jones with them because my dad is crazy, but also awesome. I loved Indiana Jones at age five. It scared me, but it was so cool. But the thing was I obviously didn't have the language skills to actually follow the conversation in movies at that age, so my dad would sit with me and explain everything that was going on in the movie. [Laughing] From age five ... He would basically create a meta-narrative. So I was listening to the language happening and the plot and watching people's -- the behavior of the actors, in order to interpret the body language and the political dynamics and the social dynamics in the film. But then he was then giving a meta-narrative,

explaining it and telling me how to interpret those things. So he would say -- he would point things out, as a little, little child, like, 'See that? He's angry. He's jealous because that person doesn't want that guy to get the money. So they are going to come up with a scheme to get that money back without them knowing'. So like that kind of a meta-narrative created just -- my mind was so incredibly analytical that that's why when I got to college, the reason in freshman year, my professors were saying, you need to go to grad school was because that analytical thinking had been developed for so long in the context of plot that it was so easy for me to do the critical work (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Cae continued to describe the effect of the meta-narrative created by her parents "around all textual material, whether it was fiction, film, literature, science, anything. They were creating analysis and a meta-text--they fed to us and then encouraged us to create our own very actively."

Will shared a similar example of developing critical thinking skills, through discussion and analysis of a narrative that made a great impression:

My family also liked movies and we would watch them all together. Well, there is a point [in *Bridge to Terabithia*] when the female character, ... crosses over the river and it's raining and storming and she dies. She drowns. And the family goes to her funeral and it's very sad. And as they come back, the little boy asks the dad, 'Do you think she's in heaven?' And the dad says, 'Yes.' And this [has] always [stuck] with me. My dad stopped the movie and he said, 'What do you guys think about that? Do you think he's right?' 'Why do you think he says that?' And so working through the worldview of what it means to be a good person or the worldview of [who] God is, or if there is a God or whatever, versus, our worldview (personal communication, January 4, 2016).

Ann, along with five others, cited that her parents often engaged their children in a discussion during or after reading, to help them better understand concepts, expand their understanding or cause them to think through the constructs presented. Asking questions related to narratives provided in books or movies was one practice described as having developed critical thinking skills but questions related to everyday activities were also viewed by participants as a practice that helped them to develop these skills. Zack described how his father helped with thinking skills:

My dad was real big on explaining how we made it to the answer... he would sit down to look over our work, 'okay, so that's great that you got the answer right, now tell me how you got the answer right. Did you just guess, was it multiple choice?' Whether it was math or science or reading, he wanted to know how I arrived at that conclusion. And that ended up working out very well in my future studies, because ... now I can actually reason through problems as opposed to just trying to get the answer right (personal communication, November 14, 2015).

Matt described a father who used questions to help him come to logical conclusions:

Even thinking about being helped with homework or any type of task like, how do you figure this out? They wouldn't ever really just say, 'this is how you do it.' I'm not sure if this is the correct term, but people would say, the method of asking questions to get somebody to figure something out. Like, 'what do you think that means? Okay, so if you know this, then what does that mean?' ... making me figure it out by guiding us there with questions (personal communication, December 15, 2015).

Going to the grocery store and being asked "why would you buy this brand over that one?" was the type of regular questioning Jo would get from her parents in a variety of settings,

and believes fostered her critical thinking skills. Lee and Ann's mother asked "why" and "how" questions to encourage them to think about objects or ideas they encountered. Will, Lin, and Cae also experienced the questioning but Cae adds that her parents "provoked her to ask questions," exploring and discovering for herself. Nate did not recall a lot of questions from his father but remarks that his mother was more philosophical and more likely to ask questions.

Parents communicate support and encouragement. The third subtheme related to *parent-child interaction* was parents communicate support and encouragement. This was evident as the participants shared the experiences and interactions that created a sense of being loved, encouraged, and respected. Shayla expressed how she was treated with respect:

I think my parents, as long as I can remember, have generally been very encouraging of us at home. Every night at the dinner table as we were kids, we were treated as equals, not just told what to do, ... It was always about being a part and being present at that dinner table (personal communication, November 14, 2015).

Davis told a story about a time in middle school when his parents sat him down at the dinner table to discuss with him the difficulty he was having turning in assignments at school. Davis' account of the interaction revealed a genuine desire on the part of his parents to understand his behavior and treat him with respect. He remembered it as an "attempt to have it as a conversation and collaboration as opposed to always being told what was going to happen, even if that often happened when we weren't able to be reasoned with."

All participants explicitly described their parents as supportive and encouraging. These words were used again and again as interviewees described the interactions and the relationship they have with their parents. Parental support was expressed through different experiences. For example, Jo knew when she shared an accomplishment with her father, that "his whole office"

would hear about it and stated that “no matter what” her parents “are available and supportive.” Nate described his parents as “very supportive.” They encouraged his creativity in music and supported his song writing and band performances through high school. He stated that his parents “placed a high emphasis on learning and were pivotal,... in supporting me through it.” They offered a listening ear and were “really open and just supportive in nature” but not “helicopter parents.”

Matt and Davis used the words *supportive and encouragement* when describing their parents as well. Matt specifically described an “overall level of communication and encouragement” around the dinner table where parents “publically acknowledged and celebrated the accomplishments of their children’s sporting event, marching band performance or academic success.” Elli declared that she has the “most supportive parents in the world ... they believed I could achieve a lot and were very supportive when I did and also very supportive if I felt like I did not.”

Parent-child interaction was a major theme in the data. The interaction described by participants was not only constant but also engaging, going beyond the normal daily level of interaction—helping participants find meaning and develop critical thinking skills. In addition, the interaction was described as supportive and encouraging. This reporting by participants helped to answer the third research question, “how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success”?

Fourth Theme: Parent Values

Which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success? I wanted to better understand the parent attitudes that might have influenced or fostered academic success. Was

there something about the educational choices parents made for their children, the parents' beliefs or expectations about learning and education in general? During the focus groups I asked questions related to the family culture—values, traditions, house rules, and questions related to parents' beliefs about education. The findings in the data related to *parent values* that most fostered academic success came as a result of looking at the family culture.

During the focus groups, I provided the following information about family culture:

Family culture refers to the distinctives that make your family unique. It includes the beliefs, practices, routines, traditions, relationship, and values held by the family. Family goals, house rules, and what makes family members laugh are all a part of how family culture is developed (Kira Wilson, personal communication, January 31, 2016).

All of the questions asked and responses given during this study revealed something about the family culture. The *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, and *parent-child interaction* all reflect something about how the family functioned, what they valued and what they believed. Responses here describe the *most* important values and attitudes expressed by participants to have left a mark and fostered their academic success.

The last two interview questions were as follows: “describe the parent practices or attitude you believe most influenced your academic success” and “what was the most important thing your parents imparted to you?” Participants used the following words to describe what their family valued: *faith* and *time together* were the most important things they said the family valued, followed by *commitment to family* and *education*, *having fun together*, and *perseverance* and *hard work*. *Parent values* were expressed in four subthemes as follows: faith is valued, togetherness is valued, education is valued, and character is valued.

Faith is valued. Inherent in participants' descriptions of their family's faith were the parenting practices that imparted their parents' belief system, worldview, or moral values. When I asked participants "what is the most important thing your parents imparted to you", all responses implicitly or explicitly were centered on their parents' worldview. Seven participants expressed that faith or moral stability was the most important thing their parents imparted to them. Will emphatically stated:

Faith. First and foremost, like certainly they were explicit in their faith and their desire for me to have a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ but I think even more important is the way that they modeled it. Acting with humility ... putting God's kingdom first.... I think one of the biggest things they imparted to me was the importance of making my faith real and understand what it means to be a Christian (personal communication, January 4, 2016).

Zack echoed Will, saying that the most important thing his parents imparted to him was "the love of Christ":

That would be, for me, hands down, because I've gone through a season of my life without [Christ], and I can single-handedly look to when my walk with Christ wasn't good, that was when my life, in general, suffered the most (personal communication, November 14, 2015).

Moral training was the important thing imparted to Cae by her parents "teaching her right and wrong and that a decision needed to be made as to what or who she would worship." A spirit of inquiry which allowed Cae to discover the truth through analytical tools was a part of that training:

So that is why I think the inquiry and the moral teaching went hand in hand because if you didn't start from the premise that everything you do in your life, all your decisions and the quality of your life is going to be based on an active analytical inquiry, then what happens is you can inquire all you want, but if you are not analytically applying that and analyzing yourself -- the whole "know thyself" thing, if you are not actively analyzing and looking at a meta-narrative of yourself, you are just -- all you are going to do is explore, you are not actually going to allow that exploration to affect choices as much. So they gave us the analytical tools to actually apply what we discovered from our own personal inquiries (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Faith was practiced in the homes of all participants and continues to be foundational in their lives. Christianity would describe the religious belief for eleven of the participants and the other was open to and has explored many religions. Ten participants practiced their Christianity openly and with consistency, attending church every Sunday as part of their family routine. Faith was an integral part of Nate's experiences and education. Matt and Davis's parents were involved in weekly Bible study and prayer groups and prayer was practiced regularly in the home. Elli too, had parents who actively practiced their faith, attending church, reading and studying their Bible, attending Sunday school, and praying together as a family. She described her dad as a bit of a biblical scholar, enjoying Bible study and biblical history. Elli learned biblical principles from her father stating, "My dad was constantly instructing. Every conversation was like, a teaching opportunity in terms of morality or faith." She told a story of her father teaching a biblical principle through the use of a metaphor when she was 5 years old:

My dad walked me around our house ... showed me the foundation and explained to me how it was laid and then tied that analogy to our faith ... explaining that our house is old

but it has a good foundation and then relating that to like living your life in faith and faith being the foundation [of our lives] (personal communication, December 17, 2015).

Zack learned from his father's use of *Character Sketches* to teach biblical stories and character lessons. Cae's father would read the Bible in the morning to the children and would discuss the stories and their meaning. When asked to describe a way in which his parents were instructive, Will spoke admirably about his parents teaching humility through modeling and instruction, and how to seek forgiveness when he offended or wronged someone.

As participants got older they transitioned into in-depth conversation with their parents on the topic of faith. Zack's family always studied scripture together and his father was quick to use scripture to address "rebellious attitudes" and use it to encourage the children to be responsible in their studies. Biblical principles were integrated into everyday life and it was clear growing up what the parents' believed. Zack's parents were sure to let the children know, "here's what we believe is the truth, here's what we think Christ commands of it." Jo's experience was somewhat different in that she shared the faith of her parents but their belief in "God and Jesus" was not a part of the conversation in their home except when a controversial topic like evolution was discussed as part of what was being taught at school.

Faith and teamwork were agreed upon by all participants in the face to face focus group as the most important attribute of the family culture, accomplished through their parents' implicit worldview, communication, and lots of conversation. Likewise, the other focus group discussed the value that faith played in their family culture. Elli, Davis, and Matt all viewed faith as an important bonding element and integral part of the conversation at the table. Davis reported, "Faith was definitely a topic that was discussed if not regularly, certainly not infrequently."

Togetherness is valued. During the conference call focus group when asked “what was the glue that held the family together,” Elli’s immediate response was “laughter, lots of talking, lots of communication” often at the dinner table. She went on to say that the “sense of worth” she felt came as a result of her parents “taking time to be with us – both my brother and I, we spent a lot of time as a family and I always just kind of knew it wasn’t forced, they wanted to.” Matt believed that “communication and time together created a strong family bond” and Davis said that dinner time was a “joint food and discussion event” that strengthened the family culture, sitting at the table long after dinner. The face to face focus group had similar things to say about the glue that held their family together. Initially, several participants simply identified “mom” as the glue, “a self-less person and mediator of conflict.” *Togetherness* was another word used to describe the glue holding the family together and something dearly valued.

Implicit in an understanding of togetherness is the relationship participants enjoyed with their parents. As part of that togetherness, participants described family traditions, game nights, travel, and table talk as fun activities they enjoyed. Cae added that creativity, fun, and exploration were impactful practices of her parents, acknowledging the three were rooted in learning. She was clear in communicating that her father was especially eager to delight his children by surprising them with trips and exciting learning opportunities.

All participants described routines to their holidays growing up and traditions that were fondly remembered. Visiting family or having extended family to their homes was a part of the holiday tradition for ten participants. All focus group participants described traditions centered on Christmas that included getting together with family, most with extended family but a few celebrating with immediate family, only because extended family lived far away. Lin openly shared that her family had “a lot of broken branches” so she went to different locations to

celebrate with family. For Cae, the Christmas traditions were not as strong as the others in the group but she acknowledged the importance of togetherness.

Education is valued. Common among participants was the high value their parents placed on education in general and the expectation for attending college. Matt articulated for the others that his parents “placed an incredibly high value on education.” When asked “how you would describe your parent’s view of learning and education,” all participants mentioned their parents’ expectations for doing well academically and specifically for going to college. Nate was clear in understanding his parents’ expectation, “It wasn’t ever a question of, are you going to go to college, it’s where you are going to go to college.”

The expectation for college was revisited when I asked participants to describe the parenting practices or attitude they believe most affected their academic success. *Parent values* for attending college and the expectation that their children would succeed was a driving force in the lives of these participants. Zack stated, “College was always something that, this was going to happen.” Matt said, “There was always the explanation of the benefits of obtaining higher education, but I think the impetus was that it was always expected, there was never a question as to whether it was going to happen. It was a given that you were going to do that.” Davis simply stated, “The thing that most affected my academic success was just the stated expectation from day one that education was something that I was going to do.” Academic success was valued and expected. Similarly, Will said, “There was always an attitude that my parents had that my school came first because that was important.”

Two other responses to the question asked about the parenting practice or attitude that most affected their academic success varied. *Proactive* is the word used by Shayla to define the most important practice employed by her parents, explaining that her parents were “proactive in

teaching and providing learning opportunities.” Parents of Ann, Lee, Shayla and Nate also emphasized the importance of doing their best and finding something they enjoyed. Cae used a narrative to describe the importance of finding information, and analytical skills learned from her parents, identifying this as the most important practice influencing her academic success:

When I was 8 or 9 ... I started to question the historicity of religious texts, because I just didn't know where they came from and I didn't understand it. I was really questioning the scientific and historical provenance of these texts and they very actively encouraged me to do research about it at age 8. And they gave me the materials and they took me to the library and they let me look it up on my own. So that is an example of, alright, you don't know the answer, then go find it. They encouraged me to compare different historical texts, religious texts in particular. So that was excellent. That was the kind of things that I believe fostered my education the most (personal communication, June 4, 2015).

Part of practicing the belief that education and learning is vital, is giving it priority in your daily activities. Placing education and training above play, television, sports, or other activities was an attitude parents held and a discipline parents practiced. “*School comes first*” were words spoken often to Jo. Lin’s stated that “you always had to get your homework done, you always had to get your school projects done” before other activities. Lin’s parents communicated that school was a priority and came before other activities. Ann reflected on her parents’ attitude toward education:

My dad who has two doctorates at this point in his life, has always had the viewpoint of ‘why ever stop learning?’ education has always been one of their biggest things. And they never cared what we studied, so long as we continued to learn, and move foward.”

Parent values were revealed in how parents approached education. Time and again participants shared experiences and descriptions that pointed to parents believing that learning was an ongoing, constant experience that transcended the classroom with endless possibilities. The sports, the music lessons, the visits to museums, and travel experiences were evidence of the parents' belief that learning opportunities were always available and highly valued. Summing up her parents' educational philosophy by using the term "homeschool moments," Ann remarked that "every little thing" provided constant learning opportunities:

My parents had the idea that education is ...a lifetime and an everyday type of activity. So it's not something that is scheduled just from nine to five and then once you graduate, that's it. They viewed education as a tool to be able to serve and be able to really operationalize your abilities into your field of choice (personal communication, May 30, 2015).

For Shayla's parents "everything was a learning opportunity." Shayla described parents who viewed learning as "a part of life" and part of everyday encounters. Shayla did not experience pressure on grades but rather an emphasis on learning being fun; education "wasn't looked upon as separate from life." Shayla described her family culture as one that "developed around learning and reading and looking outside." By *outside* she implied seeing learning opportunities in any and every situation, ready always to learn from the people, places, and surrounding circumstances. She made it clear that her parents played a crucial role in her learning and "school is not the only way to get educated." She described her parents as "proactive, positive, and present."

Character is valued. Character qualities of diligence, perseverance, personal responsibility, servanthood, grace, and tolerance were *parent values* within the family culture

that participants expressed as important to their academic success. Hard work was a value shared by parents and imparted to participants. Ann described the character of her parents:

They believe in hard work, they believe in integrity, they believed in character, they believed in serving others. They believed in doing the best that you can do. And it's amazing how much you pick up on that, just without it [being said].

Matt expressed his *parent values* and expectation of working hard and putting education above extended learning activities:

But, basically the attitude was always, it's not that you have to have all A's, but you have to be trying your best and you have to be challenging yourself. Like, I couldn't have said, I don't want to take all these AP classes, because it's too much work with the sports and wanting to have a social life. It was very much always, 'You don't have to be the best at everything, but you have to be your best at whatever it is you are doing'.

Jo used the word perseverance in describing the family bond. Working hard and "not allowing anything less than your best" was the practice Jo described as most important to her academic success. She reflected:

They always checked our homework and helped us with it if we needed help and so that led to, if your handwriting was really sloppy, you redo the assignment. If you weren't showing all of your work in math, you redo the assignment.... It was always -- we are not going to turn in less than the best that you can do and I think they had a good understanding of what the best for each child was ... doing the best for who you are, is probably the strongest practice that led to us all eventually being very successful in what we were doing (personal communication, May 29, 2015).

When it came to his academics, Zack reported how his parents viewed his performance

and their desire to see him “accept responsibility” for his education:

I was never allowed to blame something on someone else. It was never the teacher’s question, it was never the difficulty of the material, it was always a ‘if the material’s difficult, why didn’t you study more? It wasn’t a—‘if it was a really, really hard question, why didn’t you read it more carefully?’

Shayla said, “I think my whole outlook of life is different because of the way I was parented.” She identified their “openness and acceptance” as the one of the most important things imparted to her by her parents. This tolerance or openness allowed her to enjoy a vast array of learning experiences. When asked in the face to face focus group about what his family valued, Will added servanthood was a character quality that his parents and family highly value—this idea stemming from their faith and strongly held belief in serving the local church.

House rules were a part of family culture that revealed what parents valued and helped to develop character. Although expectations varied among participants, when it came to house rules all participants had chores for which they were responsible, whether daily or on Saturday. Cae described family chores as “collective labor” and said that all the siblings “worked together on a project until it was finished... we worked hard together and we played hard together.” Nate was the only one who did not have a set list of chores. He stated there were unspoken rules related to chores and “an awareness of taking responsibility” for what needed to be done.

Faith, togetherness, education, and character were *parent values* described by participants and cultivated in the home. These expressed values helped to answer the fourth research questions, “which parenting practice or attitude of their parents’ do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success”?

Summary

This chapter reported on four major themes that emerged from the data as follows: *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, *parent-child interaction*, and *parent values*. Each of the themes and subthemes specifically answered a corresponding research question. The four research questions were as follows: how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success; in what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success; how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success; and which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success?

Parent practices perceived to have fostered academic success included: parents reading and modeling reading, parents modeling lifelong learners, parents being instructive, and parents providing extended learning opportunities. A strong work ethic, the parent-child relationship, the parents' career and instilling a love for learning were described as *parent motivators*. Analysis of *parent-child interaction* perceived to have fostered academic success revealed that interaction was a constant practice; interaction helped to develop critical thinking, and was repeatedly described as supportive and encouraging. And finally, *parent values* perceived to have fostered academic success revealed that faith, togetherness, education, and character were highly valued by parents. Each of these themes provided a descriptive summary given by participants as parenting practices they perceived to have fostered their academic success.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The basis for this study was an inquiry into the parenting practices that foster academic success. Decades of research has linked parent involvement with student achievement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Griffith, 1996; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001; Walker et al., 2010). However, much of that research has been conducted on parental involvement as it relates to school activities with less emphasis on what happens in the home. As a result, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the parenting practices experienced by graduates of masters and doctoral programs identified as having fostered their academic success. Understanding the parenting practices that motivate student achievement provides direction for educators and parents alike who are interested in advancing student achievement.

While the previous chapter provided a description of the participants' experience, in this chapter I summarize the findings, discuss and interpret the findings, and review the related literature and theoretical framework in light of the findings. The chapter concludes with implications for the fields of education and parenting, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Data collected through interviews, focus groups, and a screening survey was used in conducting this hermeneutical phenomenological study. This research examined how graduates of masters and doctoral program describe parenting practices believed to have fostered their academic success. The research questions were addressed by four themes identified in the data as follows: *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, *parent-child interaction*, and *parent values*.

The first research question asked, “How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents they perceived to have fostered academic success?” An analysis of the data showed a consistency in *parent practices* related to learning, reading, and teaching. Specifically parents were described as lifelong learners with most parents having a post graduate degree and all still involved in the learning process. Parents were shown to be readers and instructive in their interactions with their children. In addition, parents provided extended learning opportunities for their children, like music, sports, and travel that implicitly advanced their education.

The second research question asked, “In what ways did participants’ parents’ parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success?” Participants described being motivated by the work ethic and example of their parents, by a warm and supportive relationship with their parents, and by their parents’ careers and example of a love for learning. These were identified as *parent motivators*. According to the participants’ descriptions, the parent-child relationship had a noteworthy effect on their academic success.

The third research question asked, “How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success?” *Parent-child interaction* was described as a constant practice among participants and perceived to have developed critical thinking. *Support* and *encouragement* were words used often to describe the kind of *parent-child interaction* participants had with their parents, which made a connection to the relationship a motivator for success.

The fourth research question asked, “Which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral program describe as contributing most to fostering their

academic success?” *Parent values* emerged as a theme as participants described the attitudes of their parents perceived to have impacted them most. Participants identified faith, togetherness, education, and character as impactful principles that their parents highly valued.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to describe parenting practices perceived to have fostered academic success by graduates of masters and doctoral programs. In this section, I discuss the findings in relationship to the theoretical basis for this study and the empirical literature. First, however, I want to discuss the hermeneutical research design which allowed for interpretation as part of the analysis process by looking beyond the descriptions provided in the interviews. Patton (2002) states, “Interpretation involves explaining the findings, answering ‘why’ questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework” (p. 438). This might include assigning meaning through comparison or inferences and making suppositions about an idea presented in the data that might not otherwise be known.

Each of the participants gave me a window from which to view their family culture, sharing with me how their family interacted, what they valued, and what they believed. In telling their story I am aware that their story intersects with my own experiences as a parent of high achievers. Interviewees shared stories familiar to the culture of the home I sought to create and so these findings are a part of my story, one that I find compelling and noteworthy for parents seeking to raise children with a strong work ethic, who are able to think critically, find meaning and enjoyment in the learning process, and are themselves learners and teachers.

There was no significant ambiguity in the data. Although the details of experience varied from family to family the essence of the experience was more similar than different. The coding of data helped to build a framework for understanding the essence of the experience graduates of

masters and doctoral programs had with their parents and how their parents fostered academic success. The findings were the framework for which I was able to interpret the data and find meaning in their experiences as it relates to the research questions (Patton, 2002).

In an attempt to elucidate the data, there were connections between themes that are worth pointing out and surprises in the data that I did not expect to find. Connections were clearly made between lifelong learners and educational expectations, between interactions and parent-child relationship. Although most of the descriptions participants gave could be viewed as a practice in the home, analysis revealed prominent practices which provide perspective on parenting practices that relate to each of the research questions.

Descriptions of *parent practices* that were most pervasive and compelling were reading practices including reading aloud, modeling reading, and encouraging reading; description of *parent-child interaction* including the manner in which parents communicated—providing meaning in everyday encounters and providing support and encouragement; and *parent values* including faith and the expectation of attending college. To untangle the connected threads of these practices I have labeled practices related to *parent-child interaction* and *parent motivators* as *motivators* because these practices were described by participants as having motivated them to succeed academically. I have labeled *parent practices* related to reading, a love for learning, and *parents' value* of faith and education, as *models* because participants described these practices modeled by their parents and identified them as impactful.

Motivators

The findings with regards to parents being instructive and highly interactive fit my suppositions about practices that foster academic success but were not widely studied or acknowledged in the literature. Although this was expected based on my own experience and

observation of other families, I was surprised by the degree to which the *parent-child interaction* was discussed by the participants, the value placed on the relationship, and the extent to which the relationship was a motivator. Participants clearly expressed a love and respect for their parents and the relationship they enjoyed was clearly mutual. This may not seem unusual but what was surprising was the magnitude of responses connected to the relationship through *parent-child interaction*. If we were to ask how that relationship was developed it would be clear based on the import of the interactions reported, that indeed one aspect of developing the relationship was the result of time spent interacting. It is important to note that the interaction was always described as supportive and encouraging so both quantity and quality of time were important to developing the parent-child relationship that fostered academic success (Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Rogers et al., 2009).

The relationship was developed and built by the *parent-child interaction* with many of those interactions considered to be instructional whether formal or informal. The interactions helped to create the family culture; they set the values, the attitudes and beliefs for the family (Lee et al., 2009). Participants came from families where encouragement and support were freely given and given in abundance. As a result, participants implicitly and explicitly expressed confidence in themselves and their abilities (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Ishak et al., 2012).

Models

Building relationships required effort and time to develop (Jeynes, 2011). Participants experienced a significant amount of family togetherness, something parents valued. Nate spent the summers traveling and living in close quarters on a boat with his parents. Jo interacted and played games every night with her family. Five other participants were homeschooled allowing them to have constant interaction with their parents. Time with parents then cannot be

overlooked as an important factor for developing relationship and hence the ability to model educational practices and values that foster positive educational outcomes (Bandura, 1977; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012).

It follows that with all the time spent with parents, participants would identify modeling as a practice that fostered their academic success. Participants' parents modeled reading, lifelong learning, hard work, the value of education, the importance of family togetherness, and faith. Parents' values became the participants' values. Matt, Davis, Nate, Will and Zack specifically mentioned the modeling of their fathers. They learned life skills related to cars, and home repairs, but they also learned about making career choices, the need to do well in school to be successful, the importance of faith, and the value of hard work.

Parents were not passive in their parenting approach. One of the words used by participants to describe *parent practices* was *proactive*, indicating that parents were purposeful in parenting and training, taking every opportunity to teach their children. Jo used the word "pointer-outer" when describing the parenting practice of discovery and learning. Pointing out a new vegetable at the market, taking it home to explore its texture, and finding ways of cooking and eating it, was a simple example of instructive practices. Taking a walk with a toddler and pointing out the fire hydrant at the end of the street and telling her about fire trucks, hoses, and ladders communicates that the object has meaning and is connected to the red truck and siren she has seen and heard. When parenting is passive rather than proactive, the fire hydrant goes unnoticed and a learning opportunity and means for making sense of that little corner of their world is lost.

The instructive interaction of a parent can also be illustrated by pointing out and describing to a young child the nativity in the Christmas decorations around the neighborhood

not just looking at the colorful lights. It is talking about the emergency vehicles that pass by in traffic and making connections to one in the parking lot of the grocery store seen earlier or discussing the traffic light at the intersection to understand the concept of stop and go. These encounters have meaning and while not fully understood at 2, or politics at 10, the interaction teaches children that the things around them are somehow connected in meaningful ways and helps children to construct a framework for understanding the world.

Reading is a topic that has been covered in the literature but this study identified the extent to which reading took place in the home, the value of reading, and the enjoyment of reading by parents and participants alike. Having spent hours reading historical fiction, biographies, and fiction nearly every day to my children and witnessing the fruit of that in terms of their interest in reading, constructed framework for understanding history and the world, the findings fit my suppositions about reading in the home and how this practice fosters academic success.

Practices not prevalent in the literature but pervasive among the participants in this study include practices that were modeled and practices that motivated. The *parent-child interaction* and hence the relationship were significant motivators for success. Likewise, modeling reading, hard work, a love for learning, and faith were significant findings. Although these models and motivators seem obvious, the degree to which participants described these practices as impactful on their academic success was unexpected.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical basis for this study was founded on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory and the zone of proximal development, Bandura's (1977) observational learning

theory, and the biblical model of parenting. Each of these theories highlight the efficacy of modeling behavior and observational learning confirmed in the research data. Modeling was a powerful tool in the learning process and all participants reported the impact observation of their parents had on their learning and achievement.

Sociocultural learning theory/zone of proximal development. Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development elucidates that children learn as they interact and are guided by a more competent person. It stands to reason that participants in this study who described their parents as constantly interacting would be influenced by that interaction and guided in the task of learning. The application of this theory was seen in the parents' philosophical approach to education. As instructive parents they viewed daily encounters with people, places, events, and ideas as opportunities to teach their children and they provided extended learning opportunities with inherent guides. In addition to parents being a model and guide for learning, the extended learning opportunities provided for their children—music lessons, sports, scouts, and travel, to name a few, all included adult instruction and models to guide them supporting Bandura (1977) and Vygotsky's (1978) theories. Ann defined the application of this theory in her description, “see one, do one, teach one” as a practice of her parents.

In addition, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory is based on the premise that children learn through social interaction within the context of culture. Family culture as a microcosm of our social culture was implicitly and explicitly described by the participants of this study. The data collected was a snapshot of their family culture, how it functioned with its practices, norms, beliefs, traditions, and values. Learning took place within the family culture. The dinner table was a place where worldview and critical thinking was developed. Constant conversation and interaction was part of the culture that perpetuated the beliefs and values of the

family. Cae gave several accounts of the analytical thinking that was developed through interaction with her father over the plot of a movie or book. Interaction came in the form of probing questions by parents or questions provoked by parents. The result in both cases was learning, corroborating Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory.

Social learning theory. Bandura's (1994) social learning theory posits that learning takes place through observation, imitation, understanding, modeling, and motivation. Again the relevance of this theory was found when examining the research data. This theory was actualized in Nate's description of watching his father take apart a car and put it back together again, when Davis and Matt's father had them tag along to learn how to fix the soft water system, or in the fact that Will was motivated to become a writer by listening to his father tell stories when he was growing up. Observation and modeling was especially evident in the participants' description of their parents reading and the effect that practice had on participants becoming readers themselves (Bandura, 1977).

In answering the question, "in what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates that fostered their academic success", participants pointed to their parents modeling a strong work ethic and observing their parents in that process as a motivator for them to succeed. As an example, Will appreciated his father's sacrifice in paying for private school classes which made him want to work hard and do well in school. Likewise, Lee witnessed the benefits of hard work and the level of education achieved by her parents and was motivated to do the same. Bandura (1977) is worth repeating here, "Under most circumstances, a good example is therefore a much better teacher than the consequences of unguided actions" (p. 5).

When it came to modeling, one of the most important things modeled to participants was parents' values. What is important, what is right, what is wrong, how does one come to those

conclusions? Helping their children develop a worldview and critical thinking by asking those kinds of questions, provided a tool to be used continually in the learning process. Discussion and conversation led to curiosity which in turn led to greater insight. For example, all the challenging questions from his parents motivated Matt to acquire the information necessary to better defend his position at dinner table debates.

Receiving praise and feedback from a respected authority was a motivator for learning, supporting the findings of Miller et al. (2012). The parents of these participants were in fact the respected model to whom the participants attended, observed, practiced behavior or tasks, and in the end, reproduced the behavior and actions reinforced by their parents (Bandura 1977). This is especially seen in participants becoming readers, lifelong learners, and individuals who have continued to practice the faith of their parents.

As theorists Vygotsky (1978) and Bandura (1994) assert that learning takes place by observation and modeling within a culture, the family culture played a significant role. Family culture refers to the characteristics that make a family unique. It includes the beliefs, practices, routines, traditions, and norms of the family. Family goals, values, traditions, house rules, and how the family has fun together are all a part of how family culture is developed. Family culture functions like a filter for making sense of the greater culture (Bowman et al., 2012). Examining family culture expands the research on parenting styles (which looks at the method of parenting) to better understand the atmosphere of the home, the practices, values, and beliefs held by family members (Bowman et al., 2012). In the context of this study, family culture revealed what is valued, reinforced, and expressed through parent-child interaction.

The biblical model of parenting. The biblical model of parenting is understood to be teaching children principles based on scripture-principles that uphold truth, honesty, respect,

love, kindness, forgiveness, and servanthood to name a few (Schultz, 2010). Parents are charged by God with the task of training and instructing their children to follow God's commands—one of which is for children to honor and obey their parents (Deuteronomy 5:15).

As parents take upon themselves the task of training and instructing their children using biblical principles of love, kindness, respect, and discipline, boundaries are established that allow children to thrive. Parents of participants lived out the biblical principle of Deuteronomy 6: 6-7, impressing upon the hearts of their children the commands of God. The parents of these participants invested time in their children and the reward of that investment is seen not only in the academic success of these participants but also the observed character of these participants.

The fact that eleven participants came from Christian homes was not something that I actively sought but rather the result of a snowball sampling. The biblical model of parenting requires taking responsibility for parenting and being proactive about training. Even though Shayla does not identify herself as a Christian, her parents were proactive in their instruction and consistent in their interactions. Other participants not only experienced the biblical model of parenting but also had parents that lived out additional principles of Christianity. In the case of these participants, I think it can be said that Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" was realized. The training bore fruit and the result of their relationship in seeking to please and obey their parents also brought about the truth of Deuteronomy 5:16: "Honor your father and mother ...so that you may live long and that it may go well with you" (New International Version).

The biblical model not only speaks to the responsibility parents have to train their children but also the way in which that training is to be conducted. The "how" of training is seen

in the “how” of the *parent-child interaction*. Love is the “how,” and another biblical principle practiced in the home and relevant to the findings. Love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (NIV).

Love expressed as patience, kindness, and humility has a powerful effect on an individual. In the case of these participants, love was a strong motivator for wanting to please their parents which included achieving academically. The participants described the relationship with their parents as one driven by love, a relationship that is warm and encouraging while setting high standards for moral integrity, hard work, and achievement. The 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 passage is relevant on many levels to what participants experienced in their homes. It is an obvious practice and yet it is cause to ponder if it is common. This parent-child relationship common to these participants is not the experience of everyone.

Empirical Implications

Turning to the empirical implications of this study, the findings corroborate a number of studies on the topic of parental involvement and student achievement (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Ishak et al., 2012; Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Parsasirat et al., 2013; Wang, 2015). This section identifies where the data from this study intersects with the findings of previous studies reviewed in Chapter Two and highlights additional studies based on the findings. This section was organized by themes used in answering the research questions.

Parents’ practice of reading. Johnson (2010), when exploring the value of literacy within the family culture, found that attitudes and practices regarding literacy influenced the

child's view and practice of literacy in multiple aspects of life. It is clear from the findings of this study that parents of these participants valued literacy–reading to their children with regularity, encouraging reading with visits to the library, and incentivizing reading with trips to the bookstore. This practice also supports the assertions of Brock and Edmunds (2010), who stated that taking children to the library helps children succeed in school.

The *parent practices* related to reading influenced the participants' interest in reading and fostered an enjoyment of reading. The impact of reading on academic achievement cannot be underestimated. Trelease (2013) in his book, *The Read-Aloud Handbook* discusses the value of reading aloud in developing listening, vocabulary, and writing skills. These skills allow students to construct a framework from which to understand information as it is presented to them and draw upon that background knowledge in the future. A love for reading opened up a world of experiences for participants that would have otherwise been missed.

One previous study showed reading achievement and parental involvement to have a positive relationship regardless of the parents' education, showing the impact of parental involvement (Klemencic et al., 2014). However, the study also showed that parental involvement was greater among educated parents. Both of these findings were confirmed by participants. Midraj and Midraj (2011), who claimed that providing children with learning resources was associated with comprehension achievement was again, supported by the findings of this study. Participants, who reported having reading material available to them and were provided with a plethora of extended learning opportunities, made the connection between these *parent practices* and their academic success.

Parent motivators and parent-child interaction. Joshi and Acharya (2013) posit that the family environment plays a significant role in achievement motivation and therefore a better

understanding of the home environment is important. A nurturing home environment was reported by Joshi and Acharya (2013) to be positively related to a student's motivation. This is confirmed by the participants in this study, who implicitly and explicitly pointed to a nurturing relationship as a powerful motivator for their academic success. The parent-child relationship was a significant *parental motivator* for participants. Wanting to please their parents, avoid disappointing their parents, and making their parents proud, was reported by participants as a compelling force to achieve.

The practice of parental encouragement is linked to achievement motivation which according to Chabra and Kumari (2011) is the drive to success in academic work. Joshi and Acharya (2013) also reported a positive relationship between parental encouragement and achievement motivation. Participants' descriptions corroborate these reports. Each of the participants in this study came from a supportive, nurturing home and described the family culture as having fostered their academic success.

Parents communicated high standards for behavior and education, fostered critical thinking, and academic success, confirming the reports of the following studies. Studies on parenting styles report that the authoritative style of parenting has a more positive relationship to student achievement than authoritarian, permissive or dismissive parenting styles (Cherry, 2014; Ishak et al., 2012; Joshi & Acharya 2013; Kordi & Baharudin, 2010; Parsasirat et al., 2013). Chabra and Kumari (2011) report the significance of parental encouragement, an aspect of the authoritative parenting. Within the context of a nurturing family culture, authoritative parents have clearly stated, high expectations. According to Baumrind (1978), warmth and support are characteristic of this parenting style and Baumrind (2005) reports that these parents encourage critical thinking.

In addition, Ishak et al. (2012) found that authoritative parenting promotes confidence. This was a trait several of the participants identified as something instilled in them by their parents. When Matt was asked “what is the most impactful thing your parents imparted to you,” he was straight forward in stating: “I think my confidence comes from them.” Not all participants were as emphatic as Matt but others said their parents made them feel as if they could be successful in their academics and other areas of interest. The practice of encouraging their children’s best also helped participants to take responsibility for learning. The support and praise of their parents fostered a desire for self-reliance and perseverance, a cyclical relationship reported by Pino-Pasternak and Whitehead (2010).

On the subject of *parent-child interaction*, Altschul (2011) found that a parent’s discussion with their child concerning their school experience (teachers, work load, challenges, social issues, etc.) positively affects achievement. No direct questions were asked about *parent-child interaction* regarding participants’ school experience. However, the interaction was described as constant and comprehensive; therefore an assumption can be made that the school experience was discussed, which supports Altschul’s (2011) findings.

Parent values. The analysis of this study would also confirm what Hayes (2014) found to be true, that parents’ high aspirations for their children are positively associated with parental involvement and student outcomes. Participants described the perceived affect that parent’s expectation had on their academic success confirming the findings of de Apodaca, Gentling, Steinhaus and Rosenberg (2015) who reported a positive relationship between high parent expectations and achievement levels in middle school students. Ann described the expectations of her parents:

My parents were just more about-‘it’s not so much we are forcing you to go to college, but we just want you to be the best that you can be and make sure you are well educated in whatever field that you decide to go into’ (personal communication, May 30, 2015).

Davis described his parents’ expectation for him and his siblings:

There was always an indication that we would [attend college] and that was made clear to both myself and my siblings. At one point, the younger siblings were debating -- talking about wanting to do culinary school, which was all fine and good as long as he had an undergraduate degree first. It was made clear that, again, the attendance of college, the attendance of higher education was an important experience in and of itself (personal communication, December 15, 2015).

For these families, the *parents’ value* of education was evidenced in the practice of providing extended learning opportunities for their children. The extended learning opportunities provided for the participants in this study implicitly influenced and expanded their framework for understanding the world. Traveling, music lessons, boating, sports, scouts, and other activities allowed them to explore other cultures, people, and experiences that built confidence and understanding, as well as providing background knowledge for future study. It is interesting to note that eleven of the twelve participants took music classes as one of their extracurricular activities. Once again this corroborates the research of Altschul (2011), who found that extracurricular instruction had a significant positive effect on test scores.

The findings of this study corroborate the research in the field of parental involvement and student achievement conducted over the past decade in regards to parent expectations, parent education, motivation, and critical thinking (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Ishak et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2011; Joshi & Acharya, 2013; Parsasirat et al., 2013; Wang, 2015). The findings also

confirm the literature with regards to *parent-child interaction*, positive academic outcomes, and the effects of some *parent practices* on reading (Joshi & Acharya, 2013). The participants of this study confirm what has been studied with surveys and test scores quantitatively. Where I believe this study adds to the research is the extent to which the parenting practices were described and functioned as *motivators*—interaction and the relationship, and *models*—for reading, learning, and faith, to foster academic success reported by grown children who have accomplished a high level of academic achievement. These practices highlight a proactive and purposeful parent who helps children build a framework for understanding the world and find meaning in everyday encounters.

Practical Implications

Little divergence existed in the transcript meaning there was consistency in how participants described their experience. The findings confirm work conducted in the field related to the importance of parental involvement, reading, high expectation for education, and parenting styles (Cherry, 2014; Jeynes, 2012; Johnson, 2010; Miller et al., 2012; Parsasirat et al., 2013; Wang, 2015). For example, the participants implicitly describe authoritative parents (those with high expectations within the confines of a warm relationship) which studies have shown to be linked to student achievement. Other studies have shown parents' high expectations for their children's education and expectation for attending college to have a positive effect on a student's academic success.

The findings of this study are useful in educating parents about specific *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, *parent-child interaction* and *parent's values* that have fostered academic success. Helping parents understand the motivators and modeling practices that foster academic success can be part of a parent education program. Teaching parents how to develop in children

a love for story and books by reading to them at a young age and by modeling a love for reading should be included in that parent education. To achieve the greatest impact, I believe implementing these practices in early childhood is important. Trying to engage a 10 year old in a read aloud activity if he has not developed an appetite for story or developed good listening skills is more challenging than developing these skills early in life. Inspiring parents to provide books through the use of the library, a service available to all socioeconomic groups, is another practice to encourage.

As part of understanding positive *parent-child interaction*, training parents with strategies for expressing high expectation in the home (Hornby & Witte, 2010) as well as ways of communicating support and encouragement would emphasize the motivators parents can use to foster academic success. Discussing the family culture and helping parents understand that children model what they observe can also aid parents in providing a home environment that promotes reading, a love for learning, work ethic, and family values. Modeling behavior begins early; therefore it is crucial that parents are proactive in modeling positive behaviors and values related to learning.

This parent education could be provided at local libraries, preschools, elementary schools, community colleges, through parenting literature, and parent workshops (Patton, 2002). In addition, school leaders and teachers can disseminate parent information through school websites, parenting groups, parent blogs, and parent meetings.

Limitations

Limitations of the research were ways in which the data may have been distorted or misrepresent the phenomenon unintentionally (Patton, 2002). The limitations associated with

this study had to do with the demographics of participants due to a snowball sampling, the regional search for participants, and the time lapse in reporting of their experience.

As a result of the snowball sample, participants came from primarily white, Christian families with two parents, homes with highly educated parents, and although not reported, implicitly from a middle to upper socioeconomic group. Areepattamannil (2010) linked higher family income and high level of parent education to student achievement; therefore limitations exist based on the participant population and the sampling size of twelve. Although I was able to include males in the study, finding males was more challenging than finding females. This was limited by restricting the search for participants to a particular region and desire to have face to face interviews. Ultimately, the need for male participants resulted in phone interviews with two males in Virginia.

The fact that participants as adults were asked to recall their childhood was also a potential limitation of the research. Although all participants continue to have a strong relationship with their parents, for some it had been ten or more years since living in the home. Memories can fade or become distorted (Patton, 2002).

Recommendations for Future Research

Reflecting on the limitations and delimitations, there are a number of ways in which this research can be extended. Future studies might include repeating this study with a more diverse group of individuals including: individuals from single parent homes, homes with less educated parents, and a group with greater ethnic diversity among participants.

In addition, since the relationship was a powerful motivator suggested by participants, it would be interesting to study high achieving individuals who do not identify parents as having fostered their academic success or experienced a nurturing, loving family culture. This could be

done by taking individuals with a low score on the screening survey (below 50) to determine what part their parents had in their achievement, how the family culture differed, what obstacles they had to overcome, and what motivated them to achieve.

Additionally, future research could examine the role of faith or the absence of faith within a family culture. Since I did not know about the faith of participants until information came out in the interviews, questions related to religion practice could be added to the screening survey. Because eleven of the participants came from homes where Christianity was actively practiced, faith became a part of the discourse. As such, future research could explore in more depth the part faith plays in family culture and student achievement and conversely, explore the questions presented in this study with a group of individuals that do not identify themselves or their family as adhering to a religion or faith based ideology.

Summary

In summary, the findings of this research would indicate that the culture of the family played a significant role in how graduates of masters and doctoral programs described the parenting practices they believe to have fostered their academic success. To a large extent parents created a learning culture in the home where support and encouragement were plentiful. This culture was developed through *parent practices*, *parent motivators*, *parent-child interaction*, and *parent values*. Practices such as reading, interaction that was constant, espousing the value of education and work ethic, and providing extended learning opportunities were significant findings. The *parent practices* of reading to their children, enjoying reading themselves, and providing books and access to books instilled in their children a love for reading. The influence of parents modeling behaviors and attitudes was a recurring theme. As

Vygotsky (1978) and Bandura (1994) espoused in their social learning theories, these participants' lives were shaped by observing their parents as models.

The most important lesson learned then from this study was the impact of modeling lifelong learning, reading, and faith within the context of a warm, nurturing relationship that functioned as a motivator for achievement. Behaviors modeled were dependent on *parent-child interaction* which was by far the most discussed theme in the data. The common attributes of these families that stood out through the interview process was a warm relationship shared by the children and parents. This relationship was developed by parents giving the needed time to support and encourage their children in their academics and extended learning activities as well as providing instruction in the home. In this culture, children honored their parents and sought to please them. The relationship guided participants' behavior, kept them in check, and motivated them to work hard as to not disappoint the parents they loved. Parents were purposeful in training their children, following a biblical model for parent-child interaction. Love, kindness and respect given; love, kindness and respect returned.

Along with communicating support and encouragement, the *parent-child interaction* was an ongoing practice. Parents used everyday opportunities to teach their children, and to train them to think critically by engaging them in discussion, asking questions or activating curiosity. *Parent values* related to education also impacted the interaction with their children. It revealed a philosophy of learning as a continuous exercise. The inherent meaning of parents as lifelong learners was extended beyond parents advancing their formal education, to an ideology that learning was both a proactive and integrated practice. Participants were motivated by the modeling of these practices and became themselves self-reported lifelong learners.

The parent-child relationship, and faith which acted as the foundation of the relationship, was implicitly and explicitly described by participants as the glue that held the family together. Although it was unexpected to find faith and the relationship named as impactful practices perceived to have fostered academic success described by participants, these are practices that must enter the dialogue on parental involvement and student achievement. In addition, this research sheds light on the import of creating a learning culture in the home, where reading is valued and practiced, where parents provide extended learning opportunities, and where parents are proactive in instruction, as practices that foster academic success.

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Appendix A

Screening Survey

Part 1A & B-Parental Involvement

Rate the statements below based on the extent to which your parent practiced the following behaviors. On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 somewhat agree, 4 agree and 5 strongly agree, rate the following statements.

Part 1A-Parental Involvement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My parent/s set up a quiet place and time for studying at home.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My parent/s regularly shared with me the importance of school.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My parent/s helped me balance homework, home chores and outside activities.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My parent/s attended most assemblies and other special events at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My parent/s volunteered often at the school.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My parent/s checked to see that homework was done daily.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My parent/s encouraged me to participate in class.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My parent/s monitored my progress and needs in each subject.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My parent/s helped plan for future work and college.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My parent/s encouraged me to participate in community activities.	1	2	3	4	5

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Part 1B-Parental Involvement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My parent/s read to me often.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My parent/s told me stories often.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My parent/s participated with me in activities like arts and crafts, coloring painting, pasting, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My parent/s helped with projects like building, making or fixing something.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My parent/s played sports, active games, exercised together or went on bike rides.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My parent/s discussed with me, how to manage my time.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My parent/s talked about family history or ethnic heritage.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My parent/s took me to the library regularly.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My parent/s took me to visit art galleries, museums, or historical sites.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My parent/s took me to athletic or sporting events outside of school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My parent/s took me to events sponsored by a community, religious or ethnic group.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I believe the parenting practices of my parents helped to foster my academic success.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I believe my parents helped to develop my worldview and critical thinking skills.	1	2	3	4	5

Items 1-11, adapted from “The National Household Education Survey”, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2012.

Part II-Demographic Information

Please indicate your gender.

- Male
 Female

Please indicate your age group.

- 33-40 years old
 20-32 years old

Please indicate your ethnicity.

- White
 Hispanic or Latino
 Black or African American
 Native American or American Indian
 Asian / Pacific Islander
 Other

Please indicate your highest degree earned and the graduation year.

- Bachelor's degree _____
 Master's degree _____
 Doctorate degree _____

Please indicate your primary form of education K-12th.

- Public
 Private
 Homeschooled

Please indicate the marital status of the parent/s you lived with during grades K-12th.

- Married
 Divorced
 Remarried

Please provide the occupation or training of your parents.

Mother (educational training if a homemaker) _____

Father _____

Please report your graduate GPA _____

Please list the names of the college or university you attended for graduate school

Masters _____

Doctorate _____

Contact Information

Name _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Appendix B

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 2, 2015

Kira Brown Wilson

IRB Approval 2067.030215: A Phenomenological Study of Parenting Practices Perceived to Have Fostered Academic Success by Graduates of Masters and Doctoral Programs

Dear Kira,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,



*Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling*

(434) 592-4054

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Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Date: January 12, 2015

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirement for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the phenomenon of parenting practices on academic success by asking the following questions: how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success; in what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral programs that fostered their academic success; how do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success; and which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success?

Participants for this study must be between 22-32 years old, hold a masters or doctoral degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher, view parenting practices as strongly significant in fostering their academic success, are willing to complete a brief survey, be interviewed and participate in a focus group to discuss their parent's parenting practices. It should take approximately one to two hours for the interview and an hour and a half for the focus group, scheduled at different times. Steps will be taken to safeguard confidentiality with pseudonyms used to describe your experience. No identifying information will be used in publishing the results.

To participate, please type your name and the date on the consent form, complete the screening survey, and return both documents by January 19, 2015 to [REDACTED]. After receiving the results I will contact you with regards to scheduling the interview and focus group. The consent document will contain additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a \$25 gift card after the data has been collected from the interview and focus group.

Sincerely,

Kira Wilson

Appendix D

Recruitment Follow-up Letter

Date: January 15, 2015

[Recipient]

[Title]

[Company]

[Address 1]

[Address 2]

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. I sent an email earlier this week inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to provide consent for participation by typing your name and date on the consent form, completing the screening survey, and returning documents it to me by January 19, 2015 via email.

If you choose to participate, in addition to the screening survey you will consent to a one- to two-hour interview and participate in a focus group with 7-15 other participants of the study. Both the interview and focus group will occur within a four-week period of time at a place convenient for participants. Your name, age, gender, ethnicity, marital status of parent growing up, education level, rating of belief regarding parenting practices, and your graduate GPA are included on the survey and will be requested as part of your participation. In addition, you will be asked to answer questions related to your parent's parenting practices that you believe fostered your academic success during the interview and focus group.

To participate, please type your name and the date on the consent form, complete the screening survey, and return both documents by January 19, 2015 to [REDACTED]. If you have any trouble opening the attachments or have questions you may call me. After receiving the results I will contact you with regards to scheduling the interview and focus group. The informed consent document contains additional information about my research.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a \$25 gift card after the data has been collected from the interview and focus group.

Sincerely,

Kira Wilson

Appendix E

CONSENT FORM

A Phenomenological Study of Parenting Practices Perceived to Have Fostered Academic Success by Graduates of Masters and Doctoral Programs

Kira Brown Wilson
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study to explore parenting practices that foster academic success. Criteria include education level, age, GPA and belief that the parenting practices of your parents fostered your academic success. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Kira Wilson, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to describe the parenting practices perceived to have fostered academic success by graduates of masters and doctoral programs in search of common experiences shared by the participants. Questions to explore include How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parenting practices of their parents that they perceive to have fostered academic success?, In what ways did participants' parents' parenting practices motivate graduates of masters and doctoral program that fostered their academic success?, How do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe the parent-child communication they perceive to have fostered academic success?, and Which parenting practice or attitude of their parents do graduates of masters and doctoral programs describe as contributing most to fostering their academic success?

Procedures:

If you consent to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: Sign a consent form, complete a brief survey rating statements concerning your parents' involvement, family activities, with a few demographic questions regarding your education, consent to a one on one audio recorded interview of approximately one to two hours in length and participate in a one and a half hour focus group with 7-15 other participants of the study. Both of these occasions will be scheduled within four weeks of each other. You will have the option of meeting at Panera Bread, a public library or your home for the interview. The focus group will take place in the community room at local Panera Bread. E-conferencing may also be available for the focus group.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risk: The risk of participation is no more than the risk you would encounter in everyday life. If there are significant psychological concerns that arise from memory of childhood events, I will encourage you to remove yourself from the study.

Participants are not expected to receive any direct benefit from participating in the study.

There are several possible benefits of this study to society. First, the results will help educators to better understand how the dynamics of the home impact academic success in order to provide parent education regarding these findings and increase student achievement. Second, parents will benefit from this study in learning about specific practices for better parenting that foster academic success, described by grown children who were successful in their educational career. Lastly, this study will extend the literature on parental involvement and practices in the home (unrelated to school activities) that foster achievement and will serve as a basis for further study.

Compensation:

You will receive a \$25 gift card for participating once all data has been collected.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Audio tapes will be transcribed, and both the tape and transcription will be stored securely. Only the researcher will have access to the records. Participant's name on the survey and transcribed interview will be replaced with pseudonyms. Consent forms and code sheet will be stored separately from data. After the three-year retention period, paper files will be shredded, computer files deleted, and audio files erased. Until that time, paper files, forms, and audio tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible to the researcher only. Electronic files of the interview and focus group transcriptions will be maintained using password protected software and a computer with security software installed. The use of audio recording and a focus group limits the full assurance of confidentiality by nature of other participants hearing your responses in the focus group. However, the above procedures will help to safeguard confidentiality as names and characteristics of participants will not be identified in the written report of this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question, review and/or withdraw the audio taped interview from the research, or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

You may withdraw at any time by sending an email stating your desire to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Kira Wilson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at [REDACTED]. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Paul Tapper, at [REDACTED]. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [REDACTED].

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: Please check each box that applies.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

- I understand that all information is confidential and I will not be identified in the research.
- I understand this is a study about my perceptions on my parents' parenting practices that fostered academic success.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can decline to answer questions or remove myself from the study at any time without penalty or reprisal.
- I agree to the interviews and focus group being audio-recorded.

-
- I **CONSENT** to participate in this research project.

OR

- I do **NOT** wish to participate in this survey.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F**Copyright Permission-Parent Survey**

Joyce Epstein <[REDACTED]>

Mon 11/24/2014 4:24 AM

To: Wilson, Kira; 11-24-14

To: Kira Wilson

From: Joyce Epstein

RE: Requested Permission

This is to give you permission to use or adapt our survey *High School and Family Partnerships: Surveys for Teachers, Parents, and Students in High School* for your doctoral study.

All that we require is that you include a full reference to the original work in your reporting and publications.

Best of luck with your project and degree program.

Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.
Director, Center on School, Family, and
Community Partnerships and
National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS)
Research Professor of Sociology and Education

[REDACTED]

Appendix G

Sample Interview Transcript: Cae

Q. -I will tell you a little bit of the purpose of the interviews. I'm conducting qualitative research, which means that I'm not trying to prove or disprove a hypothesis but rather tell a story of individuals who have share a common experience. In this case, the shared experience is growing up with parents who were involved in your life to the extent that you believe them to have fostered your academic success. So the questions are intended to help direct your thoughts in ways in which you perceive parenting practice that may have influenced and aided your academic success and be able to tell stories that might describe those practices in a way that illustrates how they were involved in your life. Do you have any questions before we get started?

ANSWER

No.

Q.-First, can you tell me how old you are? What is your age?

ANSWER

Twenty-eight.

Q. -And your field of study?

ANSWER

Rhetoric and composition.

Q. -And your birth order?

ANSWER

I'm the oldest of five.

Q. -Can you tell me a little bit about your education and how did you become interested in your area of study?

ANSWER

Ok, well originally I wanted to teach middle school. I thought about that in 8th grade. So I was heading towards -- and I was thinking I would probably teach language arts, so when I went to do my Bachelors, I doubled majored in literature, because English has several tracks, so I did literature with the intent of getting um, a teaching certification as like a minor. Which I pretty much did do that. But then I also did a second major in music just because, you know, one of those things you do in college. I dropped out of that to a minor after one year because after a year of doing the English program, I had consistent feedback from professors saying, this is -- you're good at this. You need to continue. You should go to grad school, this is good. And my parents were actually a huge part of that as well. They were watching me do music and English and they were going, "You are struggling in music, you are thriving in English, your teachers are saying the same thing." So between those two voices, that is why I decided to just go full fledged with the ah, English. And then I did my Masters at the same university, so the -- they only offered a couple of Master's degrees and I was living -- I was place bound, so um, and I have free in-state

tuition, so I didn't want to go out of state. So if I was going to stay in-state, I was going to stay in my um current living situation. So, um I did their Literary Cultural and Textual Studies Masters. In the process of doing that, I got an assistance ship and to do that you have to do work first in a writing center and then you take a practicum course and then you became the teacher for composition. At that time, that was the only thing you could teach as a masters student. So in the process of taking that practicum and getting involved in the Writing Center, I was drawn from the cultural studies and literature side more and more heavily to um, literacy studies and writing about writing. I helped develop curriculum that was a new curriculum with an up and coming scholar at the time and she kind of started saying, "Hey, maybe you should get your PhD in this field um, instead of in English -- I mean, instead of in Literature." It's a huge transition. But um, I met my husband, he was in medical school in another university nearby. I was going to be moving there, so when I was finished with my Masters, I went ahead and applied to the PhD program in Rhetoric and Composition at his -- at the university he was at, which was the nearest one to me. And I got a full ride to go there for my PhD, so honestly, when I applied to that -- I was going to apply to both Literature and Rhet Comp, but -- oh, and I guess what I should say as well that's relevant to your study is, I wasn't planning to do my PhD. I wasn't actually planning to do my Masters either, but each time right before the due date to apply -- I wanted to do my Masters but I was in a situation where it didn't look like it was going to work out. At the last minute, it worked out and I got the scholarship with the -- as I was finishing my Masters, my father and my husband sat me down and basically said, "We think it would be crazy for you not to apply to the PhD program and you should definitely be getting your PhD." Because, because [REDACTED] was in medical school, like it was going to be several years before we were financially independent and before I could have children, so they said, it would make no sense for me not to use that time to get my PhD. So that was the two voices that influenced that decision. Um, and then when I got to my PhD program, I focused on medicine partially because my father was a doctor and I had that long term experience and my husband was now in his -- the same medical school with the same teachers. So I became part of that community. Um, so it was still related to my parents. And then also because there was an up and coming like a leading scholar in the field who had just become the head of the program at my school, which I had no control over. But it all just fell together that way, so that's that

Q. -Initially what drew you to English?

ANSWER

Is that all you really needed to know there? So, ah, when I was seven, my parents um had a set of -- well, my dad starting reading to me stories at a very young age, but I would say when I was seven, my parents had a set of books called *The Children's Illustrated Classics* which ev--a lot of people know about. A lot of my peers grew up with these. And I was obsessed with them and starting at age seven, I would just hoard them in my room and read them non-stop through the night, like one after the other and I started watching *Wishbone* [laughing] and I would say between *Wishbone* and *The Children's Illustrated Classics*, I became completely obsessed with fiction writing. Um, really, for me, it was about stories as a child. And so because I was obsessed with fiction, I read a lot and then my dad actually was-- I would say the reason I ended up -- even though that was a draw towards language arts, it was just because I enjoyed story um my skills with the language itself as more of an art and science were definitely very much cultivated and developed by my parents, specifically my dad threw adult literature at me starting at about age seven and eight. Um and he also encouraged me to begin writing personally -- journals, when I

was seven. So I actually started writing memoir style writing at age seven and I truly – like looking back, I believe that was the key to developing my writing skills. Cuz now I’m not primarily a literary scholar, I’m a writer. That’s what I do now is I -- and I plan to make a career of it. I’m going to have a book coming out, which I never, as a child, I never thought that’s what I would do. I never felt like I was a writer. But if I hadn’t begun the process of putting thoughts into words and formulating, especially with handwriting versus typing, because your composition is so much more limited and like final when you write with your hand. You can’t go back and erase it and fix it. So I really practiced thinking a lot about what I would say before I wrote it and doing it faster and regularly and faster and regularly, so that I would say is a huge thing. That was something my dad really wanted me to do and followed up to make sure I was doing it. And my mom was um very into language arts and she just encouraged us to practice -- more of the traditional art of writing in the creative sense. So she gave us lots of opportunities to practice that. Then they put me in a school that was heavy writing and reading, kind of like an IB style, but we had to write essays every week and we had to read a novel a week. So...

Q. -Tell me a little bit about that because you wrote down “homeschool” but you are mentioning a school.

ANSWER

So they put me in a, its -- I don’t even know what they’re technically called. I think they’re technically private schools, but they’re for homeschoolers, they meet once a week. So it was a one day a week -- actually it was called a preparatory school because it was a college prep school and they used mostly traditional, classical methods from I would say um -- there was a Roman – oh, it’s pretty much exactly the curriculum that is laid out in um, dang-- what’s his name? Do you know what I’m talking about? He’s a rhetorician actually but -- he started the Roman public school system.

Q. -Douglas Wilson?

ANSWER

No, he’s Roman. Literally from classical Rome. He like -I will come up with it later and send it to you. If you read his book on education, it’s the exact same -- he literally followed it to the T.

Um but um anyways, we had heavy emphasis on rhetoric, history, literature, writing and logic.

Q. -What grades was this?

ANSWER

So that was starting in, that was uh 7th and 8th and 9th. And then they put me in a church based three day a week high school after that for 10th and 11th and then I um dual enrolled full time for my final senior year -- my 12th grade year. So um the, so from grade 7 to 9 and also through 11th, but 7 to 9 a read a novel a week and wrote at least two essays a week. And then also had to do speech every week. Had to give an impromptu speech every week and a um formal speech several times a semester. But my parents -- I will never forget it, because I was a procrastinator and I would do all my homework pretty much the day before and they would stay up until 2:00 in the morning helping me write my essays. Every week. It was a horrible work pattern. So like I

would say that would be one weakness. But the thing is, they would just -- the patience they had to do that week in and week out, knowing that that's probably what was going to happen. It was pretty incredible. So they knew, having me in that school and me being that way, they knew that was what they were in for. So that was dedication for sure.

Q. -Describe the extent to which reading was important or practiced in your home.

ANSWER

Starting at what age?

Q. -As early as, as it started.

ANSWER

So my mom -- I mean, from younger than I can remember -- I mean, I remember the books-I remember when I was like three years old and I remember books I had at age three and I know I had them for a long time. So there were certain children -- there were definitely board books and children's books, but I know my mom would take us to the library reg- like once a week. It was pretty much a once a week practice to go to the library and I loved picture books and we would um-- we were allowed to pick out as many picture books as we wanted every week, which was a lot. I don't even know how we carried them. There was no limit. So that was awesome, I loved that. But honestly, I would say -- it was the images that definitely drew me to books initially. And then -- but then when I was five, my dad started reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* to me every night and it was just -- even though I had two siblings at that point, they weren't old enough, so I got to -- it was very special cuz I'd get to go in my -- I usually go sit on the floor next to my dad's bed and he would lay in bed and read while I was laying in like a sleeping bag on the floor. I have very specific memories of that. Um so he read through those books and I loved those I loved those books. I feel like that's really when I started to be obsessed with stories as opposed to just picture books. So that was at age five and then it wasn't long -- I mean really, it was age six and a half, seven that I started reading *The Children's Illustrated Classics*. My mom, I would say like that wouldn't have been possible at that age if my mom had not, starting - - I was in a Montessori school for preschool I believe-- and kindergarten? I think just preschool. I remember it very clearly though. They did a great job of teaching the alphabet, so I had my alphabet by preschool, but then my mom, starting in kindergarten, started teaching me to read and I remember learning to read and it being very -- taking so much patience and it was frustrating, but I remember learning and her just every single day -- she taught me to read. So every single day my mom had a set of readers, we had a set of phonics books and we had a set of flashcards for phonics and it wasn't *Hooked on Phonics* but it was similar, it was a phonetic based curriculum. And we read through blends and then we read through word groups and then we read our readers and I remember really loving going through the small readers, the paper readers. You know you actually would finish one in a day or two and so it felt like you accomplished something. So you had a stack of them. So I liked that um curriculum a lot. Then I helped my siblings learn how to read because they were all home schooled. So actually, I think that may have been what boosted my reading level to be able to read *The Illustrated Classics* by age seven, now that I think about it. So I didn't help my first sister, [REDACTED] but I know my second sister, [REDACTED] and my brothers, I did. I actually, I'm pretty sure I taught [REDACTED] to read myself. It was mostly my job, because she had other things to care about at that point. But I remember I would help [REDACTED] go through the blends and go through the phonic flashcards.

Q. -What types of things were read regularly in your home? Were other things read out loud other than *The Chronicles of Narnia*? Was that a practice?

ANSWER

Yeah. Okay, let me think about this. Um well, my mom read stories -- my mom and dad read us stories every night before bed. Um, so and actually yeah, I think we were allowed to have three stories before bed. And of course, the more kids there were, the more competition, but like we -- even when my little brothers were in the four or five range and I was in the middle school range, we still would all still listen to a book together for my dad to read at night. So we went through a lot of children's novels that way. And I actually started picking out a lot of the children's novels for us all to read because I would read books and be like, hey guys, this is great! And either I would read it to my younger siblings -- actually, I should say, me and my sisters took turns sharing rooms or having our own room and whenever I shared a room with one of my sisters, we would stay up at night past when we were supposed to be asleep, reading out loud to each other. So we would be in the big group reading session where we were reading through a fiction novel, which I may have already read, but I still enjoyed hearing my dad read it out loud to my younger siblings and then we would go to bed and I would read out loud to my sister that is the older age bracket. So there is a lot. Then they were allowed to have little storybooks for the really little kids. So it was at least three waves of reading every night once we got to having that many kids. Other than that, my mom also would read out loud our lessons every day. You know, she would read -- if we had science textbooks or anything, she was reading it out loud to us until we were reading it on our own. And even if we were--Some of it was always read out loud or her presenting material. Or us reading a lesson out loud to our siblings because sometimes we would share curriculum for science. So that went on regularly. Um, there was also nursery rhymes and things that my mom did for educational reasons. Ad um, in the mornings we would -- once I reached age eight, me and my sister who was five, I guess at the time, would wake up in the mornings and my dad would do Bible study with us, so we would read passages on our own and then my dad would read the lessons with us. Or he would read the passage and we would read the lesson, I don't remember, but there was reading in the morning; um, reading the Bible and history text to go with it, explaining the history of the culture. And that was mostly Old Testament when we went through that. So

Q. -Was there discussion that followed the reading? Whether it be...

ANSWER

Yes, that was the main focus. Most of the time the reading was how it started, but then there was also writing. There was reading, discussion and writing on our own in response.

Q. -How would you describe your parents' view of the learning and education?

ANSWER

They valued it extremely highly. Um there was a small phase where because of religious dogma, there was a small phase where my dad thought it would be -- it was admirable that I said I didn't want to go to college. That was when I was like, four. So by the time I was six or seven, he was saying, "No, you are going to college. Sorry, you may not want to go to college." My mom

consistently tried to convince me, because I just saw it as, “Why would you go to more school when you finish 12 grades of school? Why would you go for more school?” And my mom would always tell stories about going to college and say, “No, it’s so much fun. You live with all these other ladies, all on campus and you get to be friends and then you learn, you can take whatever classes you want. It’s not just math, science and language and history. You can take anything design, you can take pottery, you can take special kinds of sciences or special kinds of history and literature and art. You can take art history.” She was an art history major for one year so she actually did teach us art history as children. She tried to really talk it up so that we would always want to go to college um and told us stories. And she told us stories about bad things about college too, like she disapproved of sororities and the bad things that went on in sororities and how crappy it could be for your health. So that was also part of our formation of how we thought about college, which is interesting if you think about it. That is something that she never said, “Oh, its bad because you don’t study.” But it was-we dogmatically, me and my sisters, would not be a part of sororities and we saw it as something that would hurt your studies, so it affected our studies -- ‘cause it does. We have studies to prove that now. *Academic Adrift* would be the recent benchmark for that. Study groups don’t help you study. Um so, all that to say – um and then my dad was very, very much encouraging that we all have skills in a career. So they wanted us to have families too, but my dad was very adamant about us having our own profession. So.

Q. -Ok, um. Describe family routines that you found instructive. Like, things your family did regularly. Whether it was mealtime, bedtimes? Um, you mentioned something-all tht reading. But were there other things?

ANSWER

Yeah, um, my mom took on -- both of my parents enjoyed teaching, they were naturally gifted in the area of teaching. So they would take on teaching other people’s kids too. Like, my mom hosted uh uh homeschool co-op in her home for years, for just science for example one year. It was always like, there was science, reading, writing, literature and um -- I don’t think they did math in the co-op. And then a couple years they did history. And um, but we were raising geese one year. Like just I mean, just so many things -- like, from hatching eggs and raising geese and setting them free in the wild to taking us to science centers and museums. We couldn’t go on vacation without visiting at least one historical site. When we went to Washington D.C. once for my dad to do a medical conference, my mom-obviously it was a huge week long field trip to all the historical sites, but then she also read us the biographies of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington on the trip, at the hotel room when we weren’t doing site studies. Like so much stuff like that. Lots of television that was highly educational. Like I said, when *Wishbone* -- could definitely be marked up as one of the number one reasons I was an English major. But *Reading Rainbow* -- actually, I would say *Reading Rainbow* was the other number one influence on me for reading. I have made a very concerted effort to find and buy the *Reading Rainbow* books for my child because I’m obsessed with them and I was when I was a kid. So, *Reading Rainbow*, *Sesame Street*, um *Mr. Rogers* -- which all have components of reading and story building and language arts and history, etcetera and -- but also *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, *Beakman* -- lots and lots of educational television. Um, oh, *The Magic School Bus* was the other big one. And then, I mean, everything was instructive, honestly. We did music -- we were all allowed to do music, sports and art lessons. We all learned how to paint in watercolor, pastel, oil. We learned how to

draw. Um we took dance, we did basketball. My brothers did baseball and soccer. I want to say my sister did Tae Kwon Do. Um, I mean it's endless.

Q. -So what was your evening meal time like and conversation at the dinner table?

ANSWER

Fighting over who got to sit by Mom, that was definitely the first topic of importance. Once that was hammered out -- that was a little more general. I feel like we more just were goofing off. Honestly, we goofed off. Sometimes my parents would say like, "Oh, what are you learning about?" or "How was school?" If it was a co-op day, we talked a little bit about the day was like. But a lot of the time it was more interpersonal stories about drama or funny things that happened between friends or silly things that other kids did. Um. Oh, another instructive thing was that my parents -- we lived in a neighborhood with a ton of kids, a lot of them were home schooled, but even the ones who weren't would all play outside a lot [snickering]. And my parents really, really encouraged and welcomed other kids into the home and allowed us to play constructive play. Um, so we played a lot -- one of our favorite games was "Town" which we set up our own economy, financial system and created professions and guilds and things like that. Um, so if my mom hadn't uh -- other parents wouldn't let us play at their houses, so I mean if she hadn't facilitated that kind of play -- and she taught us those kind of games. Like, she told us how to set up a pretend restaurant and assigned roles to everyone to be the -- who is the restaurant owner? Who is the maître d'? Who is the server? Who is the cook? Okay, now, you have to organize yourselves into this -- she taught us to play those and we in turn taught those games to our friends. Um, so a lot of pretending/real life, surviving on deserted islands, which is based on my readings of things like *Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. So then based on those books, I created a very defined world with parameters in which people had to operate to survive and we weren't allowed to do these things and we were allowed to these things. So that was educational play, instructive, which again, was facilitated by both the location, but also what I had been reading and my parents encouraging that. What was your original question that I went back to that from? Table talk wasn't honestly very defined. It was anything. Usually goofing off and kids fighting, to be honest.

Q. -Describe parenting practices that fostered the development of critical thinking.

ANSWER

Oh, a lot of those. I will say one thing that was about dinner time. A lot of times it was actually my dad telling stories about his work. We loved -- that was our favorite. That is actually the one thing I remember because it was the only thing that was awesome. I would always wish that my dad had a story to tell from work, but if he didn't, it was just us goofing off. But what I remember would be him telling stories about how the office was running or how he interacted with patients or weird, bizarre phenomenon that he saw and how he figured it out. And the other thing that happened was my dad allowed patients to come to the house and he did active, minor surgery at our house a lot of the time. And we got to help. So that was a really, really, really good hands on experience. Obviously it shaped our um perception of bodily functions and human interaction with body and we aren't squeamish in any way or -- um and it fostered interest and then exploring through television programs. Like even adult things like the Discovery Channel, things about the body and science and biology in general. They put tons of

documentaries on Discovery Channel and stuff like that too. So and you said? What did you ask me?

Q. -Develop critical thinking.

ANSWER

So television -- the other thing that helped develop critical thinking that I very distinctly remember from an extremely young age. Actually, this is in the top list of why I also pursued higher education. Starting -- I can't even remember, I remember being like five -- yeah, because it was the year [REDACTED] was born -- five. My parents let me watch things like *Indiana Jones* with them because my dad is crazy, but also awesome. I loved *Indiana Jones* at age five. It scared me, but it was so cool. But the thing was, I obviously didn't have the language skills to actually follow the conversation in movies at that age, so my dad would sit with me and explain everything that was going on in the movie. [Laughing] From age five. I remember this entire life. He would basically create a meta-narrative. So I was listening to the language happening and the plot and watching people's -- the behavior of the actors, in order to interpret the body language and the political dynamics and the social dynamics in the film. But then he was then giving a meta-narrative, explaining it and telling me how to interpret those things. So he would say -- like he would point things out, as a little, little child, like, "See that? He's angry. He's jealous because that person doesn't want that guy to get the money. So they are going to come up with a scheme to get that money back without them knowing." So like that kind of a meta-narrative created just -- my mind was so incredibly analytical that that's why when I got to college, the reason in freshman year, my professors were saying, you need to go to grad school was because that analytical thinking had been developed for so long in the context of plot that it was so easy for me to do the critical work. So that -- I mean, I feel like as a female, it made sense that that was channeled towards story, because women's affinity to story, but then also just our system does tend to funnel women that way. I think if I had more exposure to science to other things and hadn't felt like science and math was more for boys, I might have ended up an engineer instead of a literary person. It's just that that was the easiest -- the thing I had the most access to, to practice my analytical skills on. I will say that much. Um, I didn't feel like my parents told me that science and math isn't for girls, it's just that my mom wasn't good at science or math and because she was the primary teacher, she really did not -- she did not emphasize the math especially. And because I never gained the math skills, I wasn't able to pursue higher science and higher ed. So I will say that much. But um, I don't know if you are going to bring gender into your analysis at all, but -- I think I answered your question, I don't remember it any more.

Q. -Describe how your parents helped you learn a new task. Driving a car, riding a bike, making something.

ANSWER

They just let us do it. They did it with us. They explained -- no, they broke it down into analytical steps, they let us do it and then they corrected us. That was pretty much the system.

Q. -Tell me how you were motivated by your parents to attain a high level of education.

ANSWER

I think I kind of answered that.

Q. -In terms of just their expectations.

ANSWER

Um, Talking up college, saying that it was something we should do. Oh, maybe another thing was emphasizing in early high school that we needed certain -- I think being a homeschooler, it's easier to -- you have to keep track of what is required by the state. So then because you have to do that research to figure out what is required to graduate, you kind of start learning earlier on, I think, than parents of public schoolers, what is required to get the Florida scholarships because it's oftentimes listed together. So we were -- also when I started doing like high school credits, it was from the get go, like oh, by the way, if you do these high school credits and you get this GPA, that can go towards you getting your bright future. So like early, early working towards the bright futures -- like not necessarily because I had to do it, had to get it, but because well, you might as well get it while you are doing all of this stuff. Then you have it and you can use it if you want to. Um, so that was one thing. Um and then the other stuff -- just -- I guess, I don't know, I wanted to go to college. I liked learning. I think they made education fun, so fun and exploring things so fun, and they encouraged us to explore, question and learn. So if they hadn't encouraged us to question things and investigate and research on our own -- because that was something we liked, we developed a -- it became part of our daily life. So, because that was part of daily life, it just seemed natural to keep investigating. I would definitely say that.

Q. -What part do you think their own education and their own interest and learning affected you?

ANSWER

Because to them it was just natural that if you didn't know what something was, you went and researched it and looked it up.

Q. -So that would be their example, they would have done that themselves.

ANSWER

Yes. My mother loved reading and she kept a -- she always pointed out the fact that she kept a dictionary with her at all times because if she didn't know what a word was, she would look it up. Then she would put a list of words at the back of the book that she learned -- on the back cover. So I mean, that is a very small example, because there is a lot bigger things than words. I mean, if they didn't know how -- my mom looked -- she taught us how, from a very young age, you use the library to find answers because of course the internet really wasn't accessible until I was in middle school. She wasn't really computer savvy. We didn't really learn that way. But um just even using the library. But just the expectation that if you want to know how something works, you just go figure it out. She did that. If we asked, she would say, "Let's go look it up." And then my dad was always learning new things. Always. Even if they were recreational, he set the pattern to us as kids, it seemed obvious that yeah, you just keep learning about new stuff the older you get. Like that's just what you do. So.

Q. -How would you describe their method of communicating with you?

ANSWER

You mean in everyday life? In just everyday life, across the board? Uh. I'd say they were very -- they always spoke to us assuming we understood -- what is the word I'm looking for here? Like, they spoke above our level. So they never talked lower than our level. They raised the bar and expected us to get up to it. So I remember -- the only reason I really know that is because of comments from other adults. So like I remember one adult at one time when I was young saying -- me going and complaining because their kid, my friend, was antagonizing me. "Mrs. So and So they are antagonizing me!" And she was like, "Antagonize? Like how do you know the word 'antagonize'?" To me, that was word of being in trouble. "You are antagonizing your siblings, stop it!" I didn't realize that that was vocabulary that wouldn't necessarily be usually used with children, but obviously my parents were using vocabulary that, they expected us to just get at their vocabulary. They didn't change their vocabulary for us. So I definitely saw that in my younger siblings too, once I got older. I saw that in them in how they compared to others. But like, so that would be one way I could define it. Then I would say "abundantly". Everything was definitely analyzed and explained more rather than less.

Q. -As an example, describe how your parents communicated with you regarding your first job or applying for college.

ANSWER

Well, the advice was pretty straight forward. Don't ever work for less than \$10 an hour. Basically my dad, being an entrepreneur said, "Never, ever, ever take a wage when you can make more for some personal skill you have." So he basically said, "You will never work in a restaurant." Not because there is something wrong with that, but because I had enough training in piano that I could make at least \$10 an hour doing piano lessons. So why would I -- even cleaning houses paid better. So some people may see cleaning houses as menial, but it paid a lot higher than minimum wage. So they encouraged us -- my dad particularly really encouraged um working for the highest wage you could and not having to work for somebody if you could have skills that you could provide and services you could provide yourself. And he encouraged developing our own services. And then child care was another thing we were all encouraged to do, but as more of a community service. Then once we had gotten enough practice through community services child care, we were able to develop that as a service where we did it better than other people, so we could charge more eventually. Like, I ended up nannying, which pays very highly, um when I was in college. I did some nannying over the summer and that paid very high. So that would be --

Q. -And how about applying for college? How involved were they in that process?

ANSWER

They were -- I was the first, so it was a huge learning curve, actually for them. Um, my mom did it. My dad did some, but honestly, they kind of made that decision for me. I didn't really -- I wasn't offered the option to apply at multiple locations. Um, they basically -- I was financially dependent and they didn't encourage me to be financially independent, they discouraged me

from -- actually, they forbid me from being financially independent. So that meant that I had to live at home to go to college, so that meant that I had to apply to the college that was geographically within driving distance.

Q. -What was their motivation for your not being independent?

ANSWER

They believed it would be financially better for me in the long run and – and which I would say was true. It paid off because I have no loans, none. I don't owe a penny on my education and that is something my professors also had said. Basically, never, ever pay a penny for your education. That was their number one recommendation and I followed it. But um, so I think that was a huge part of it and then it was also because they believed that I would be happier and safer as a human being within a home with a family, rather than in an independent living situation. And um, it was also cultural that my dad didn't believe that children, specifically women, should um be independent of a family until they were married.

Q. -How would you describe the relationship that you have with your parents?

ANSWER

Um, I would say we had a great intellectual relationship. And that my mom and I are very, very close and we were best friends growing up. My mom and I are best friends growing up, definitely.

Q. -Describe the parenting practices or attitudes that you believe most fostered your academic success.

ANSWER

I think it was definitely the meta-narratives that my parents created around all textual material, whether it was fiction, film, literature, science, anything. They were creating analysis and a meta text -- they fed to us and then encouraged us to create our own very actively. Um, there's one other thing I thought I would bring up that is a great example. When I was eight or nine, I started to question I started to question the historicity of religious text, because I just didn't know where they came from and I didn't understand it. I was really questioning the scientific and historical provenance of these text and they very actively encouraged me to do research about it at age eight. And they gave me the materials and they took me to the library and they let me look it up on my own. So that is an example of, alright, you don't know the answer, then go find it. And uh they encouraged me to compare -- reading compare um different historical texts, religious texts in particular. So that was excellent. Um, that kind of -- that was the kind of things that I believe fostered my education the most.

Q. -Would you say that your siblings for the most part experienced that same intellectual stimulation?

ANSWER

Yes. Yes.

Q. -What was the most important thing that you think your parents imparted to you?

ANSWER

Um, yikes-That's really hard. I mean I would definitely have to say my moral training as um a human being, teaching me that there is right and wrong. Teaching me that you -- as humans we all worship something. And that I had to decide very actively what I would worship or else I would just end up worshipping something and be dragged along into who knows what. That was definitely the best thing you could possibly teach a child. And then walking me -- holding my hand in the process of seeking those answers for how I would choose to believe and live as a moral being. Um, that was definitely the most important thing. And then um I think with that, including that -- inquiry, encouraging the inquiry -- spirit of inquiry, would be the other thing.

Q. -In that process, it sounds like even though they imparted it, they also left it up to you to explore it as well.

ANSWER

Definitely, 100%. The inquiry -- if you are actually going to genuinely teach inquiry to your children, you have to let them actually have their own hypothesis and test their own conclusions and they allowed that um within safety -- within safety limits, which I think was great. That's what parents should do. They should protect their kids. But they gave a lot of freedom for inquiry and um -- there was something I was going to add to that. Um, but I think -- you can't just encourage inquiry without also setting some kind of scientific laws there and the scientific laws that they laid out within the inquiry was basically that just inquiring, the purpose of it is to make choices. So that is why I think the inquiry and the moral teaching went hand in hand because if you didn't start from the premise that everything you do in your life -- all your decisions and the quality of your life is going to be based on an active analytical inquiry, then what happens is you can inquire all you want, but if you are not analytically applying that and analyzing yourself -- the whole "know thyself" thing, if you're not actively analyzing and looking at a meta-narrative of yourself, you're just -- all you're going to do is you know explore, you're not actually going to allow that exploration to affect choices as much. So they gave us the analytical tools to actually apply what we discovered from our own personal inquiries. So I think that is really important too.

Q. -Anything else that you would just in general in speaking about parenting practices that fostered your academic success, anything else that comes to mind?

ANSWER

I covered a lot. Sorry.

Q. -No, it's great. Thank you.

Appendix H

Sample of Coded Transcript Using Atlas.ti

The screenshot shows the ATLAS.ti software interface. The main window displays a transcript with the following text:

060 Q
061 Describe family routines that you found instructive. Things your family did regularly. Mealtime, bedtimes? Were there other things?
062
063 ANSWER
[21:30] My mom took on – both of my parents enjoyed teaching, they were naturally gifted in the area of teaching. So they would take on teaching other people's kids too. Like, my mom hosted a homeschool co-op in her home for years, for just science for example one year. It was always like, there was science, reading, writing, literature and – I don't think they did math in the co-op. Then a couple years they did history. And um, we were raising geese one year. I mean, just so many things – like, from hatching eggs and raising geese and setting them free in the wild to taking us to science centers and museums. We couldn't go on vacation without visiting at least one historical site. [22:31] When we went to Washington D.C. once for my dad to do a medical conference, obviously it was a huge week long field trip to all the historical sites, but then she also read us the biographies of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington on the trip, at the hotel room when we weren't doing site studies. So much stuff like that. Lots of television that was highly educational. Like I said, when Wishbone – could definitely be marked up as one of the number one reasons I was an English major. But Reading Rainbow – actually, I would say Reading Rainbow was the other number one influence on me for reading. I have made a very concerted effort to find and buy the Reading Rainbow books for my child because I'm obsessed with them and I was when I was a kid. So, Reading Rainbow, Sesame Street, Mr. Rogers – which all have components of reading and story building and language arts and history, etcetera and – but also Bill Nye the Science Guy [23:31], Beakman – lots and lots of educational television. Oh, The Magic School Bus was the other big one. I mean, everything was instructive, honestly. We did music – we were all allowed to do music, sports and art lessons. We all learned how to paint in watercolor, pastel, oil. We learned how to draw. We took dance, we did basketball. My brothers did baseball and soccer. I want to say my sister did Tae Kwon Do. Um, it's endless.

064 Q
What was your supper meal time like and conversation at the dinner table?

The right-hand pane shows the following codes applied to the text:

- Educational Approach~
- Parent as Lifelong Learner~
- Parent Influence~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Educational Approach~
- Travel~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Reading Aloud~
- Educational TV~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Educational TV~
- Educational TV~
- Critical Thinking~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Non Academic Activities~

This screenshot shows the same ATLAS.ti interface and transcript as above, but with a different set of codes applied to the text:

- Educational Approach~
- Parent as Lifelong Learner~
- Parent Influence~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Educational Approach~
- Travel~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Reading Aloud~
- Educational TV~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Educational TV~
- Educational TV~
- Critical Thinking~
- Instruction in the Home~
- Non Academic Activities~

Appendix I
Member Checking Email

Hello [REDACTED]

As part of the member checking process to ensure trustworthiness of my manuscript, I am sending you a copy of the transcript from the interview. I am also sending you a draft of the results section of my manuscript and ask that you check the transcript document for accuracy of statements and descriptions. You will want to look over your demographic information in Table 1 and report any missing information. You will also see a short summary about you to review. In looking over the document, you can scan for your name to check accuracy and check “all participant” statement to ensure that I am not misrepresenting you.

Please feel free to clarify any data that misrepresents your experience. You may add comments by selecting the “New Comment” under the “Review Tab”.

Please return your comments to me or confirm that accuracy of the information reported by Sunday February 21, 2016.

Feel free to call if you have questions.

Thank you again,

Kira Wilson

[REDACTED]

Appendix J

Code Frequency and Meanings

The following is a list of the codes created in Atlas.ti showing the number of responses from the interview transcripts for that code and an explanation of their meaning. Responses occurring fewer than nine times were not included in the data analysis with the exception of educational television because this was discussed during the focus group.

1. College Living Arrangement (1) references where participants lived during college
2. Constructive Play (1) - references how parents provided for or encouraged constructive play when the children were young.
3. Critical Thinking (51) - references parents teaching or imparting critical thinking skills.
4. Discipline (8) - references how participants' perceived the discipline style of their parents.
5. Educational Approach of Parents (50) - references the educational approach the participant received during their education (public, private, home, formal, informal).
6. Educational TV in the Home (8) - references participants describing watching educational television programs like Wishbone, Reading Rainbow, Mr. Rogers, etc.
7. Encouraged Reading (25) - references parents encouraging reading, visiting bookstores, or libraries.
8. Extended Learning (41) - references learning outside of school-summer camps, music lessons, family field trips, etc. Responses may also be coded as Non-Academic Activities.
9. Family Conversation (58) - references family conversation.
10. Family Recreation (16) - references activities that the family engaged in together (e.g. game night, movies, trips).
11. Family Religion Beliefs (20) - references family religious beliefs or practices.

12. Family Routines (51) - refers to routine activities in the home: dinner time, reading time, bedtime, etc
13. Impactful Practices on Education (65) - references an impactful parenting practice what participants describe as having fostered their academic success.
14. Instruction in the Home (66) - references instructive activity in the home.
15. Learning a New Task from Parents (45) - references participants telling how their parents went about teaching them a new task (e.g. cooking, fixing the plumbing, learning to drive)
16. Methods of Communicating (36) - references how parents communicated with their children.
17. Most Important Lesson from Parents (27) - refers to answers to the questions-what was the most important thing that your parents imparted to you?
18. Motivation to Achieve (60) - references how parents motivated a high level of education: by example, by reward of higher education, by expectations of parent, by the relationship-wanting to please
19. Non-Academic Activities (36) - references learning opportunities given to the children beyond academics (dance, music, sports, etc)
20. Open Communication (7) - references the participant describing an open line of communication with parents. Parents were accessible and available.
21. Parent-child Interaction (106) - references participant's mention of parent-child interaction.
22. Parent Attitude toward Education (38) - references parent's attitudes towards education. Whether it was viewed as a school activity or everyday activities.

23. Parent Expectations (12) - references statement related to parents expectations for doing their best and or going to college.
24. Parent Influence (55) - references how the parents influenced participants' educational choices
25. Parent Reading (26) - references the extent to which parents read; when and what the parents read.
26. Parent Support (52) - reference participants receiving support in their educational and enrichment activities-help editing or writing essay, help completing applications, etc.
27. Parents Valued Education (20) - references statements from participants that their parents highly valued education.
28. Reading Aloud (29) - references participants' statements indicating that their parents read to them as a child.
29. Reading Early (16) - references participants made to learning to read at an early age or being read to at an early age.
30. Reading Enjoyment (23) - references participants made to really enjoying reading as a child and a reference to parents' enjoyment of reading.
31. Reading Genre (24) - references the genre of reading at an early age (classic, biographies, fiction, etc).
32. Reading Importance (17) - references the importance of reading in the home.
33. Reading with Sibling (30) - references participants reading aloud with a sibling.
34. Relationship with Parents (54) - references responses indicating that participant and parent were close and enjoyed doing things together both growing up and currently.
35. Travel Practices (34) - references family travel and learning while traveling.

36. Parents' Work Ethic (24) - reference parents' modeling of work ethic.
37. Parent as Lifelong Learner (35) - references the parent as a lifelong learner.
38. Parents' Expectation for College (28) - references the expectations parents had for participants going to college.
39. Parents' Post Graduate Education (11) - references the post graduate education of parents.
40. Participant's Post Graduate Education (12) - references the participants' post grad education.