Parental Communication Patterns and The Impact on Young Children

Janice Ringstaff

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ABSTRACT

Communication is the process of sending and receiving messages. Such messages may impact an individual’s overall functioning across the lifespan. Parents are usually the first source of information exchange for children. The Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), originally published in 1976, is an education program that teaches positive parenting and effective communication strategies. STEP encourages parents to embrace concepts of mutual respect and equality while creating opportunities for parents to meet the demands of raising children. There is limited data assessing parental change in communication patterns among parents of young school-aged children following systematic training. Twelve parents with children in second and third grade were recruited for this study. All participants completed the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPSS), and the Open-ended Questionnaire pre and post participation in the program. This study helps fill the gap in the literature regarding changes in parental responses and perception of parenting skills following participation in the STEP program for young school-aged children.

Keywords: communication, parenting practices, child development, parental competence
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to everyone that has lifted me in prayer, spoken words of encouragement, and in your special ways; supported me through many nights that were filled with tears, frustration, and doubt. For those who walked with me in corrective and counseling modes, I am most grateful. To my parents (in heaven), siblings (birth and otherwise claimed), children (birth, adoption, and all other connections), and grandchildren, I love you beyond the beyond. Your strength, tolerance, acceptance, patience, and love helped create my story, structure my foundation, and ignite my passion for caring for families. To the families that will share in the benefits through the knowledge gained from this study, may the Lord’s blessings rest upon you. Remember: kindness knows no limits.

Romans 8:28
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This time of my life finds me bereft of the physical presence of my grandparents, parents, and two sisters yet, their presence is felt daily. Most days spent with them are fondly remembered, (though some I desire to have known more closely), and other times are captured as learning opportunities and fertile soil for continued growth and development. Saying “Thank you” falls short for all the feelings and emotions surrounding the entirety of this study.

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The motivation and purpose for this study was to increase my knowledge and skill in Christian counseling, to be informed, prepared, and effective in meeting the mental health needs of families while giving glory to Jesus Christ during the process. I want to say thank you to my professors in the Community Care and Counseling: Marriage and Family Department, the support staff, every student advisor that ensured my class registrations was complete, and to my gifted editor (Dr. Juanita White). I am so sure that each of you is celebrating with me (smile)!

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To my church family, especially my Sunday morning fellowship class, thank you. You all are remarkable! Most of all, To the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I bow in humbled submission to your will for my life. I vow to always remember whose footsteps I see in the sand, mud, grass, and on the waves. To all yet to be met and served, I made it through, to God be the glory!!!

Psalm 23
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List of Abbreviations

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)
African American (AA)
Executive Functioning (EF)
Emotion Regulation (ER)
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS)
Perceived Ability to Relate (PAR)
Self-Efficacy Beliefs (SEB)
Self-Efficacy Scale (SES)
Social Learning Theory (SLT)
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP)
Stepping Stone Triple P (SSTP)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Observations of parent-child interactions provided the basis for this study. In recognizing repetitive and challenging parent-child interactions (verbal and nonverbal), an emerging question arose; could changes in parent/guardian responses affect their interactions? This study specifically investigates if participation in the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) training will result in changes in parent-child interactions. Using a single-subject (one group) study, the focus of this study was on exploring the influence of parental training on communication patterns and self-reported parental self-efficacy among parents/guardians of second and third-graders. Previous research focused on enhancing introspective and interactive activities (for parents) and found modified positive exchanges between parents and younger aged children (Parry, Simpson & Weatherhead, 2018; Suarez, Byrne, & Rodrigo, 2018). This study will also focus on enhancing overall parenting by looking at parental self-efficacy, the influence of parental training on communication patterns, and if both parental self-efficacy and parental communication patterns change after the participation in parent training (i.e., STEP).

Historical Background

Positively transitioning a child from birth to adulthood requires effective parenting skills (Ainsworth, 1989; Batool & Ahmad, 2016; Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015; Larsson, Viding, Rijsdijk, & Plomin, 2008; Scharf & Rousseau, 2017; Willinger, Diendorfer-Radner, Willnauer, Jörgl, & Hager, 2005). Shinn and O’Brien (2008) argue that multilayering, (implicit, direct, subtle, or embedded messages), exists in everyday verbal transmissions between parent and child, peeling away the layers may reveal unexpected and unintended interpretations. Parental attachment and memory suggestibility play a significant role in parent-child interactions (Chae,
Goodman, Larson, Augusti, Alley, VanMeene, Culver, & Coulter, 2014). How a child interprets parental messages closely aligns with what the child recalls about the interaction (Chae et al., 2014). Making sure messages are clear and concise is essential when conveying one’s needs, wants, and expectations. When parents’ words are very clear, the messages received by their children are more likely to be explicitly understood (Wimsatt, Fite, Grassetti, & Rathert, 2013). Regularly spoken words of encouragement, praise, and comfort may enrich the home, school, and community environments. Negatively spoken words could yield pessimistic paradigms throughout a child’s lifetime (Wimsatt et al., 2013). This unfavorable mist could hang over children, potentially fostering feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. The messaging process may influence a child’s perceptions of their environment and experiences.

The effect of parental interactions exceeds the present moment as parental interactions have short and long-term psychosocial effects on child development across the lifespan (Boppana & Rodriguez, 2017; Chae et al., 2014; Golding, 2000; Grebelsky-Lichtman, 2014; Parry et al., 2018; Pederson, Rathert, Fite, & Stoppelbein, 2016; Kim, Knudson-Martin, & Tuttle, 2014; Mejia, Ulph, & Calam, 2015; Shelton, Frick, & Wooten, 1996; Schofield, Conger, Donnellan, Jochem, Widaman, & Conger, 2012; Wilson & Durbin, 2013). As child development progresses with changing needs, so do parental responses. Parents may begin to seek less of a directional approach and work toward communications that are consistent in responsiveness (Deater-Decker, Wang, Chen, & Bell, 2012; Wilson & Durbin, 2013). As children continue to meet developmental milestones, they typically began to embrace/practice their parents coping and communication skills, which include the emergence of emotional regulation, which influences self-worth and interpersonal relationships (Saba, 2005; Ulu & Erdentug, 2018). Parenting practices such as hostile and inconsistent disciplinary choices have a negative
impact on the child’s own later parenting practices (Beckerman, van Berkel, Mesman, & Alink, 2018). A strong connection exists between abusive, abrasive, and rejecting behaviors directed toward a child by the parent and developmental issues among youth (Schofield, Conger, & Conger, 2017). As a child witness parental behavior, he or she may adopt and employ such observed behaviors (Crouch, Irwin, Milner Skowronski, Rutledge, & Davila, 2017). For children exposed to harsh parenting, managing emotions and self-efficacy skills may become challenging tasks due to deficits in problem-solving and self-perception. This can even lead to deficits in his or her own future parenting ability (Scharf & Rousseau, 2017). Harsh parenting practices, coupled with emotional and behavioral dysregulation in children, may lead to escalations in negative and aversive parent-child interactions (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015). Still, some youth overcome such obstacles of unhealthy, negative parenting practices, while others do not. With such information, Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, (2005) noted limited attention given to how parent-child relationships may be affected by later changes in parenting behaviors.

**Social Influences**

Parental warmth and support can influence personality development (Schofield et al., 2012) and socialization in children (Alfaro & Umaña-Taylor, 2009; Murry, Creswell, & Cooper, 2009). Research has documented that positive parental behaviors (e.g., acceptance, empathy, and warmth) promote secure attachment and overall positive development (Baumrind, 1967; Kolblinsy, Kuvalanka, & Randolph, 2006; Maccoby & Martin 1983; Shelton, Frick, & Wootton, 1996). On the other hand, unsupportive parenting has been found to result in negative engagement, poor socialization, deficient academic outcomes, delinquency, depression, aggression, and substance abuse (McCabe & Barnett, 2000; Hundleby & Mercer 1987; Pineda et al., 2007; Steinburg, 1990), positive parenting practices have been found to promote
socialization, competence, and academic in youth worldwide (Andriessen, Phalet, & Lens, 2006; Barber et al., 2005; Yang, 2011) and across a variety of racial and ethnic minorities (Bean, Bush, McKenry, & Wilson, 2003; Bush, 2000; Bush, Bean, Battle-Haring, Peterson & Wilson, 2000; Bush, Peterson & Cobas, 2002; Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel, & Rowley, 2008; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Seidman, Allen, Abner, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994; Wang & Eccles, 2012). Socialization is so important that the social environment of a child partially determines later socialization characteristics (Biller & Solomon, 1986; Bisnaire, Firestone & Raynard, 1990; Schofield et al., 2017).

Just as parenting behaviors, directly and indirectly, affect children (Batool & Ahmad, 2016; Eisenberg et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2015; Katz, Maliken & Stetter, 2012), one parent may also affect the other parent’s practices. If a co-parent demonstrates warm, supportive, and nurturing behaviors toward children, his or her partner is also more apt to adopt those behaviors (Schofield et al., 2017). Locke’s (1689) view of a child’s environment focused on parents’ beliefs, community set beliefs, attitudes, values, and how these affect a child’s “tabula rosa” (or “blank slate”). The role of caregivers in the socialization of youth is critical in gaining an understanding of competence and regulation (Eisenberg et al., 1998).

It is also important to consider how early parenting practices significantly determine future parenting behaviors. Expectations about self as a parent, the child, and parent-child relationships may form before the parenthood stage becomes a reality (Scharf & Rousseau, 2017). Attachment is developed and formed through early parent-child interactions, which later influence an individual’s own parenting (Borelli, Burkhart, Rasmussen, Brody, & Sbarra, 2017).

**Neurological Development**

Positive environmental experiences, including sensitive interaction with primary
caregivers during infancy, early childhood, and adolescence, may even have a favorable effect on brain development (Bernier, Carlson, & Whipple, 2010; Craig & Dunn, 2007; Schofield et al., 2012). Early parent-child relational experiences may intertwine with a child’s neurological and cognitive development. Brain development in infancy affects the executive functioning (EF) of the child (Bernier, Carlson, Deschênes, & Matte-Gagne 2012. Meyer, Hajack, Torpey, Kujawa, Kim, Buffered, & Klein’s (2013b) study showed an increase in error-related brain activity in young children with anxiety-related concerns. Even with the research that exists, Bernier et al. (2012) highlights the need for more literature regarding the prospective connection between early caregiving environments and the executive function performance of younger children.

**Parental Support and Academics**

Parental support is also directly related to children’s grades (Entwisle & Alexander, 1990; Halle, Kurtz-Costes, & Mahoney, 1997; Hess, Holloway, Dickson, & Price, 1984; Spera, 2005, 2006; Wooley & Groan-Kaylor 2006), school attendance (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morrison, 2006; Dotterer, McHale, & Crouter, 2009; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001), and depression among children and youth (Bean, Barber, & Crane, 2006; Bögels & Brechman-Toussaint, 2006; Lamborn & Felbab, 2003; Peterson & Rollins, 1987). Supports have been found necessary in combating the negative forces of poverty, crime, discrimination, poor-quality schools, and sub-par neighborhoods (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994. Parents hold the keys to providing the support needed in challenging these outcomes. Through actively monitoring behaviors (theirs and the child’s), expressing warm regard, and creating an atmosphere of positivity, behavior and academic performance can be improved (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1996; Henry, Plunkett, & Sands, 2011; Yaros, Lochman, & Wells, 2016). Although parental support is vital, nonparental supports (e.g., mentors, social networks,
etc.) are oftentimes necessary as they can help fill in deficits for lack of support at home and contribute to the physical and psychological well-being of children (Zimmermann, Bingenheimer & Notaro, 2002).

**Parental Self-efficacy**

In order to provide needed support, parents should be adequately equipped; research suggests that parental education levels are directly related to parenting behaviors (Anderson, 2015). Coleman and Karraker (1997) highlighted self-efficacy as an important predictor of parenting practices. Parental self-efficacy is the estimation of the degree to which parents see themselves as being capable of performing several tasks relating to parenting (Coleman & Karraker, 1997). Parenting practices include being available, protective, nurturing, and caring for children throughout their developmental years (Coleman & Karraker, 1997). Parental self-efficacy relates to the quality of parenting, maternal depression, and child temperament; social support and poverty have been found to be related to parental self-efficacy (Coleman & Karraker, 1997). Parents with high self-efficacy usually find parenting more gratifying, which results in increased positive parenting practices (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Wimsatt et al., 2013).

Sensitive parenting leads to strong parent-child attachment relationships, an important part of social-emotional development in children (van der Voort, Juffer, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2014). Sensitive parenting style encompasses the ability to notice a child’s signals, correctly interpret, and act on them quickly and appropriately. Sensitive parenting also acknowledges the child’s mental state and foresees his or her psychological needs (van der Voort et al., 2014). Mothers who have experienced sensitive parenting through emotional warmth and responsiveness can establish a more affectionate relationship with their children (Siddiqui & Hagglof, 2000).
**Problem Statement**

Parenting practices can be affected by a number of different variables. What is clear is that parenting practices, both positive and negative, have the capacity to greatly affect both the parent-child relationship and the overall development of a child (Baydar & Akcinar, 2018; Chase & Peacock, 2017; Li, Chan, Mak, & Lam, 2013; Schofield et al., 2012). Research in the past has highlighted the need for parents to increase self-awareness concerning communication/parenting styles and the resulting effect on the development of young school-aged children (Meredith and Bennings, 1979). Increased awareness of current behavioral patterns may encourage parents/guardians to pursue and utilize alternative approaches with their child(ren).

Some studies have found that parental training enhances the parent-child relationship, and reduces harsh parenting practices (Gibson, 1999; Li et al., 2013; Saba, 2005); however, other studies show weak evidence for long term effectiveness from some training programs (Iusitini et al., 2011; Kleefman, Jansen, Stewart, & Reijneveld, 2014; Knerr et al., 2013). Overall, there is a need for more research on parental behaviors (Baydar & Akcinar, 2018). Atzaba-Poria and Pike, 2015; Polcari, Rabi, Bolger & Teicher, 2014) and the impact of training programs on parental self-efficacy (Kleefman et al., 2014; Knerr et al., 2013).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine whether education, through participation in the STEP program, can change reported parenting communication patterns and parental self-efficacy. The STEP program assists in developing skills and is designed to enable parents to live with their children cooperatively (Dinkmeyer, McKay, & Dinkmeyer 1997). It is hoped that this study can narrow the gap in the literature concerning parental awareness of the effect of communication patterns on young children by implementing the STEP model as a method of
alternative communication strategies.

**Significance of the Study**

Baydar and Akcinar (2018) and Schofield et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of understanding child development and how parenting practices influence the developmental process. Ineffective parenting practices can affect child development (Akcinar & Shaw, 2018; Bartkowski and Wilcox, 2000). Parenting programs may modify parental behaviors, increase positive discipline practices, and in turn, result in positive changes in children’s behaviors and overall well-being (Frydenberg, Deans, & Liang, 2014; Wilson, Roberts, Rack, & Delaney, 2008). The advantages of the aforementioned benefits may be realized if parents/guardians become more cognizant of what practices /behaviors need to change and the implications of their behaviors in remaining stagnant.

**Parental Support**

Research has highlighted how prenatal attachment in utero affects the early maternal-child relationship (Siddiqui & Hagglof, 2000). Researchers drew additional correlations between childhood anxiety, mood, and personality disorders and prenatal drug and alcohol exposure (Afifi, Mota, Sareen, & MacMillan, 2017; Kinsella & Monk, 2009). Other external factors, including low socioeconomic conditions, poverty, and education, affect the unborn child/infant’s birth weight and potential for survival (Khan, Arbab, Murad, Khan, & Abdullah, 2014). As a child grows, the role of caregivers has a critical impact on socialization, emotional intelligence, and emotional regulation/externalizing problems (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Eisenberg, Spinard, Valiente, Fabes, & Liew, 2005). Research has found that emotion relevant parenting behaviors (ERPB) are correlated with how youth express their emotions, empathy, and social competence (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Eisenberg, 2005; Katz et al., 2012; Meyer, Carlton, Chong, &
Wissermann, 2019). It is vital for parents to recognize how their beliefs and expectations about their child and themselves may sway their parenting practices (Atkinson, Gonzalez, Kashy, Santo Basile, Maselli, Pereira, & Levitan, 2013; Bandura, 1989; Bandura, Barbarnelli, Capara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Muris, Meesters, Merckelbach, & Hülsenbeck, 2000; Murphy, 1992; Park & Park, 2015). How parents view their role strongly influences the parent-child relationship (Heinicke, Diskin, Ramsey-Klee, & Given, 1983; Lovejoy, Verda, & Hayes, 1997). The outcomes of this study will help determine whether education focused on parenting skills can affect change in parental communications patterns and perception of self-efficacy.

**Research Questions**

**RQ1:** Does STEP training result in parental use of effective communication patterns?

**H1:** After completing STEP training, parents will use effective communication patterns, resulting in changes in KPS responses.

**H0:** After completing STEP training, parents will not use effective communication patterns, resulting in no change in KPS responses.

**RQ2:** Will the STEP program lead to a change in parental self-efficacy?

**H2:** Parents participating in the STEP program will have increased self-efficacy, as evidenced by changes in the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), Open-ended Questions, and Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS).

**H0:** Parents participating in the STEP program will not have increased self-efficacy, as evidenced by no changes in the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), Open-ended Questions, and Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS).
Definitions

1. **Bidirectional** - The flow of influence goes both ways, such as in communications between parent and child; sender and receiver messages carry impact (Baydar & Akcinar, 2018; Pardini, Fite, & Burke, 2008).

2. **Child development** - The growth process of cognitive, social, emotional, physical, maturation (Bernier et al., 2010; Bernier, Carlson, Deschênes, & Matt-Gagne, 2012; Schofield et al., 2012).

3. **Communication patterns** - The style and structure of content used to convey messages, whether they use visual or verbal pathways (Bugental, Kaswan, & Love, 1971; Shinn & O’Brien, 2008).

4. **Executive function (EF)** - The mental processes of impulse control, planning, decision-making ability for new or uncertain situations (Bernier et al., 2012).

5. **Generalizability/generalize** – The ability to draw a conclusion that can apply to common application/the public (Warner, 2013).

6. **Harsh parenting** - The use of coercive, demanding tactics including verbal hostility, psychological control, and severe physical punishment that may lead to child maltreatment and compromise of psychosocial development (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Crouch et al., 2017).

7. **Perception** - The process of interpreting messages, usually based on relational meaning (McLaren & Pederson, 2014).

8. **Positive parenting** - Behaviors extending warm, supportive, and responsive responses towards children (Dallaire, Pineda, Cole, Ciesla, Jacquez, Lagrange, & Bruce, 2006).

9. **Self-efficacy** - The perception of competence, motivation, cognitive resources to meet certain
needs, ability to accomplish certain tasks (Bandura, 1977; Coleman & Karracker, 1997; Meunier & Roskam, 2009).

10. **Transition** - The process of moving from one stage or point in time to another, such as moving from pregnancy to parenthood or childhood to adolescence (Jones, Cassidy, & Shaver, 2015; Saba, 2005).
Summary

Sensitive caregiving sways both child and parental responses, affects parent and child overall wellbeing, and influences feelings of love (Borelli et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2014; Mejia et al., 2015; Polcari et al., 2013). Prior researchers have explored the process of child growth and development with mixed views on the effectiveness of parental training programs. There is a need for ongoing research on parenting programs (Knerr et al., 2013; Saba, 2005). No research to date has studied parent-child communication patterns and perception of parent self-efficacy following the STEP program. In this study, the potential influence of the STEP program on parental communication patterns and self-efficacy, specifically for parents of second and third-grade children, will be explored.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

As parents are a child’s first source of guidance, protection, provision, and instruction, effective parenting skills are essential to overall child development across the lifespan (Affonso & Sheptak, 1989; Ainsworth, 1989; Bandura, 1989, Corey, 2005; Craig & Dunn, 2007). The impact of Dinkmeyer et al., (1976) Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) education program on parents’ (of second and third-grade children) self-efficacy and communication patterns were investigated in this study. Also investigated were the parenting practices and parenting skills participants currently reported by these parents.

A mixture of ideas and theories helped to form this study and the selected treatment employed in the study. The STEP program is based on Adler’s (Dinkmeyer et al., 1976) theory of Individual Psychology. Adler’s approach teaches parental strategies for effectively addressing child behaviors and seeking opportunities to better understand the underlying purpose of such behaviors (Corey, 2005). The STEP program, a group program originally published by Dinkmeyer et al., (1976), has a primary goal of helping parents learn to live cooperatively with their children through effective communications. Bandura’s (1977, 1989) Social Learning Theory (SLT) encourages learning by doing and observing. Learning can take place through direct observation and modeling of others’ behaviors. The goal of this study is to teach, model, and encourage practices of effective parental communication responses through the use of the STEP program.

Theoretical Considerations

Adler’s approach to therapy encourages taking responsibility, finding meaning, goal setting, and establishing purposeful behavior (Dinkmeyer & Dinkmeyer, 1981). This method
incorporates looking at childhood experiences to help explore present behaviors while seeking motivation to reach self-improvement. The Adlerian theory supports coping with feelings of inferiority and striving to contribute to society. This theory emphasizes how an individual perceives the past, social relatedness, and how one chooses his or her options. Corey (2005) posited that Adlerian theory, or Individual Psychology, poses a soft deterministic view, in the belief individuals have the freedom to decide/choose what he or she wants (i.e., human nature is not determined solely by heredity or the environment). Adler focused on re-educating individuals, reshaping society, and understanding people within the systems in which they live. Rudolph Dreikurs popularized the Adlerian theory in the United States (Corey, 2005; Dinkmeyer, & Dinkmeyer, 1981).

Various agencies use STEP for counseling, parent training groups, and other various settings directed at enhancing parenting skills. While embracing society’s current family structure, the STEP program also honors diversity in parenting (Dinkmeyer et al., 1976). One of the important goals of the program is to help adults learn to live with their children cooperatively through a democratic process. Such democratic principles include mutual respect and equality. Alongside respect is the corresponding goal of teaching communication skills. STEP, through education, helps parents reconsider their current methods of raising children while providing opportunities for parents to meet challenges with healthy alternatives (Dinkmeyer et al., 1976).

Related Literature

Parent-child interactions are known to have both short and long-term effects (Wilson & Durbin, 2013). Children may carry lessons learned from parents not only into teen and young adult relationships but also into their adult lives, as both partners and parents (Wilson & Durbin, 2013). The lessons children garner from parents may include lessons taught verbally or those
modeled through example. Lessons learned could affect how children function in various capacities. Researchers recognize depression, anxiety, aggression, anti-social behavior, and shyness among children whose parents engage in negative and inconsistent parenting practices (Dallaire et al., 2006; Timmons & Margolin, 2015). Children learn what they live; the parent-child relationship is a constant learning environment with the potential to be positive or negative. When children begin to ingest a constant flow of negativity and unstable parental responses, they have limited resources to build positive character traits, which could influence their overall development. Exposing children to harsh, negative, and non-supportive parenting increases the likelihood of future feelings of incompetence and insecurity (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015; Foster, Kernis, & Goldman, 2007; Li et al., 2013; Meyer et al., 2019).

**Parental Communication**

Parents can enhance their communication skills and their child’s level of cooperation by becoming more attuned to the child’s development and communication competence (Wilson & Durbin, 2013). As children typically mimic the behaviors of parents, it may serve parents well to be mindful of their communications. A parental response is contingent upon the child’s needs and the parents’ goal at the time of the interaction, as both are contributors to the interactive process (Cho, Yoo, & Hwang, 2015; Wilson & Durbin, 2013). When parents temper their responses with tolerance, acceptance, and sensitivity, communication patterns may become more harmonious. Forehand, Lafko, Parent, & Burt (2014) found that parents and children train each other; change in parent behavior can facilitate change in a child’s behavior. Parents using mixed messages may place their children at increased risk for harmful outcomes such as disruptive, externalizing behaviors; presented as aggression, fighting, and delinquency (Forehand et al., 2014). Children recognize the incongruent messages as young as four years of age and recognize
the meaning of verbal or nonverbal communication (Forehand et al., 2014).

Researchers who focus on the parent-child dyad as more relational than directional, also tend to support the traditional parent-child hierarchy. As children continue through their developmental processes, patterns of responsiveness emerge based on their experiences with their parents during their formative years (Deater-Deckard et al., 2012; Wilson & Durbin, 2013). Adaptive parenting demands an array of skills, including emotion regulation, empathy, and attention control, as the child matures into adulthood (Wilson & Durbin, 2013). Children’s needs and skills rapidly evolve during the early years of life, which includes their executive function and behaviors (Wilson & Durbin, 2013). As the child’s development progresses, parents began to evaluate situations and possible responses necessary to regulate how they, as parents, think and how they display emotions they feel regarding the child’s behaviors (Deater-Deckard et al., 2012; Wilson & Durbin, 2013). As parents attune to behavioral milestones across developmental stages, social and communication skills become important as well. While children develop, parent-child conversations shift toward more open communication patterns, and as developmental stages progress, some parents seek an equal relationship with their children, which may lead to the child becoming more autonomous in his or her behaviors (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015; Dallaire et al., 2006; Grebelsky-Lichtman, 2014; Kim et al., 2014; Pederson et al., 2016). However, Wilson and Durbin (2013) also noted within their infant populations, a lack of significance in responsiveness, which they associated with event-prompted indicators. This contrast in findings warrants further support in studying parental communication patterns.

Socialization and Acculturation

As children learn coping and communication skills from their parents, they also learn socialization skills (Ulu & Erdentug, 2018). The family is the primary source of socialization,
and within this unit, pass multigenerational values onto their children. Researchers documented the influence of parenting styles and such social value acquisition (Sabatier & Lannegrand-Willems, 2005; Ulu & Erdentug, 2018). Family culture oftentimes reflects the traditions, norms, beliefs, prejudices, and values they deem important. Parenting style influences the emotional climate, of which children learn. This environment includes parental attitudes and parental responsiveness, which greatly affect a child’s social, emotional, and academic development (Boppana & Rodriguez, 2017; Grebelsky-Lichtman, 2014). Atzaba-Poria & Pike (2015) emphasized the significance of parenting style on children’s self-esteem. Researchers discovered an association between children’s self-esteem and parent practices. Atzaba-Poria & Pike (2015) suggested the implications regarding parenting issues/practices is now a global concern. As our world becomes increasingly mobile geographical transitions may not be the only adjustments relocating families may experience. As a result of mobilization, family function and behaviors may undergo a shift as well. Due to the importance of parenting style on family function and child development, there is a broad interest in parenting practices (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015; Boppana & Rodriguez, 2017; Grebelsky-Lichtman, 2014). The growing interest in parenting practices is linked to the frequent relocation of families and limited knowledge of cultural norms and the significance of those norms for families (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015). Parenting may be a universal construct; however, parenting practices are usually culture-specific (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015). Another deficit regarding comprehensive (social and cultural) interest may be the influence of parental gender on children’s self-esteem. This lack of cultural awareness remains an opportunity for further study (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015), which could lead to expanded inclusiveness.

Not all boundaries that sway parent-child interactions deal with geographic settings;
emotional obstacles may create barriers as well. Rueth, Otterpohl, and Wild (2017) and Sanders, Zeman, Poon, & Miller (2015) posited the developing methods of emotional regulation (ER) emerge from how the parent and child mediate conflicts. Rueth et al., (2017) postulated that focusing on ER may facilitate understanding adaptive and maladaptive behaviors and suggested that mental health problems may result from faulty adaptions. Moreover, adaptive strategies enhance personal well-being, self-worth, and interpersonal relationships (Rueth et al., 2017). However, the inability to adjust to changes can contribute to developing low self-esteem, a feeling of worthlessness, and the inability to establish healthy relationships (Rueth et al., 2017).

Effective parenting is not an easy task, yet, it has the potential to be a rewarding endeavor; quality parenting affects children’s development and overall well-being (Meunier & Roskam, 2009; Moyer, Page, McMakin, Murrell, Lester, & Walker, 2018). Positive parenting behaviors such as nurturing, socially appropriate, and child-attuned interactions (Golding, 2000) contribute to deceased childhood aggression, internalizing, and externalizing behaviors (Forehand et al., 2014). It is important to recognize parenting skills (Golding, 2000; Spruijt, Dekker, Ziermans, & Swabb, 2018). Parents with insufficient skills tend to have less effective parent-child relationships (Golding, 2000). Awareness of parenting patterns can facilitate healthy parenting interventions; in turn, such interventions may facilitate healthier parent-child communication and relationships. Learning how parenting relates to various strategic models of therapy in the mental health field may prove beneficial when working with families (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2015; Forehand et al., 2014; Golding, 2000; Moyer et al., 2018).

**Disciplinary Styles**

Different parenting styles may result in differences in child development (Gromoske & Maguire-Jack, 2012). With some research noting specifically the negative effects of spanking,
overall, there are mixed views on the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary choice (Altschul, Lee, & Gershoff, 2016; Mejia et al., 2015). What is known is that parental use of physical punishment is associated with short and long-term adverse academic outcomes, emotional, and behavioral issues during childhood (Scott, Lewsey, Thompson, & Wilson, 2013). This lends itself to the importance of parenting training programs that promote positive discipline interventions.

Research regarding parental communication highlighted a deficit in current literature, speaking to changes in parental responses following instructional interventions as opposed to numerous studies noting changes in children’s behaviors (Kazdin, 2007). Kazdin (2007) also suggested the need to translate evidence-based therapies into generalized practice in mental health as an imperative to understanding why and how interventions lead to change. The outcomes the investigator uncovered by conducting this study have the potential to further expand these findings.

Forehand et al. (2014) selected parents of second and third-grade students in executing a study confirming important results for parenting and discipline strategies among those with children less than ten years of age. The researchers concluded parents could influence their child’s behavior using attention, praise, instructions, and monitoring. Forehand et al. (2014) also posited the effects of coercive parenting, where parents and children train each other to behave in ways leading to aggressive conduct, resulting in parental displays of escalating, controlling, and negative responses. The need to understand how interventions produce change drives the intent of this study.

Dailey (2008) spoke of the important role parent-adolescent nonverbal interactions have on self-worth and self-identity development. Good parenting practices may help the formation of
neurocognitive development. As children grow up, their executive function becomes vital to their daily function and self-concept, which directs a student’s behavior and efforts in learning situations (Gromoske & Maguire-Jack 2012; Pesu, Viljaranta, & Aunola 2016; Spruijt et al., 2018; Wilson & Durbin 2013).

Foster et al. (2007) focused on mental representations on the fulfillment and maintenance of close, secure, and valued relationships rooted in the attachment figures formed early in life. These attachment styles may be secure, preoccupied, dismissive/avoidant, and fearful/avoidant. Included in their study is the concept of self-esteem and attachment connections. Attachment issues could lead to maladaptive affective and behavioral response patterns impeding the formation of harmonious relationships. Therefore, understanding how parental behaviors affect the child’s overall development is crucial for establishing effective positive parenting (Goffin, Boldt, & Kochanska, 2018).

**Transitional Period of Growth and Development**

As the child’s growth progresses through the initial developmental stage of pregnancy (prenatal/stage one), the transition of parental roles begins to emerge. The second role change begins in infancy (postnatal period) with its unique set of demands. Still serving as the total source of survival for the infant, parents heighten their awareness of the needs of the child. During this phase of growth and development, the mother no longer focuses primarily on self-care but shares concern for and efforts to meet the basic needs of the newborn. She views the baby as a separate being living outside of the womb, thereby requiring learning new skill sets (Scharf & Rousseau, 2017; Willinger et al., 2005).

During the transition period from pregnancy to motherhood, parenting skills began to emerge and develop at different levels. An essential task taking place in the new parent-child
relationship is parental bonding. Parental bonding is an important facet in determining how the parent-child relationship develops. Although bonding occurs very early in the life cycle, the effects have long-term consequences (Jones et al., 2015). Because of the significance in later development, early attachment experiences received much attention from an empirical standpoint. Researchers noted individual patterns of these timely social relationships (attachments) during the infant stage. The attachments formed (or not formed) in infancy influence how parents interact with their children and how those children respond to them, as well as other people (Scharf & Rousseau, 2017; Willinger et al., 2005). Primary secure attachment to parents provides roadmaps for future relationships throughout ones’ lifespan (Craig & Dunn, 2007).

**Early Caregiving**

A study by Mahedy, Heron, Stapinsky, Pearson, Evans, Joinson, Bowes, … Lewis, (2014) posited sensitive caregiving is correlated with the future risk of depression across generations. Mahedy et al. (2014) noted how mental health disorders can begin to develop during early childhood and adolescents. Travis and Combs-Orme (2007), Lomanowska, Boivin, Hertzman, & Fleming (2017), and Schofield et al. (2017) investigated how parenting behaviors and styles transmit across generations. The authors found correlations between child abuse, harsh parenting, and parents’ childhood experiences. Woods-Jager, Cho, Sexton, Slagel, and Goggin (2018) highlighted the relevance of early childhood experiences and the implications it had throughout child development. Repeated/ongoing exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACE: childhood maltreatment, family dysfunction) in the form of neglect, household dysfunction, and abuse may yield long-lasting damage to a child’s physical and mental health (Woods-Jager et al., 2018). Deleterious effects could result if protective interventions are not in
place during infancy and early childhood, harming the child’s neurological development (Meyer et al. 2013b).

Choi, DiNitto, Marti, and Segal (2017) found an association of ACEs with increased risk of self-harm and suicide attempts across a person’s life. The effect of perceived burdensomeness, hopeless, self-hatred, shame, and disenchanted belongingness (family disfunction) may explain the increased rate of suicide attempts. Adversity, in the early stages of development, is likely to add to impaired affect regulation and impulsive behaviors (Choi et al., 2017).

Deficits in academic, social, and linguistic behaviors become present in children who experienced negative parenting practices. Not much is known about cross-generational depression, and a dearth of empirical literature exists concerning studies on the risk of depression in future generations. However, intergenerational transmission of parenting practices is well versed in how negative and harsh parenting crosses generational lines creating a cycle of increased risk for depression (Mahedy et al., 2014). Bjørknes & Kiøbli (2012) embarked upon a study showing children the direct effect of parental practices. Included in their study is documentation by others showing confirmatory correlations between positive parenting and reduction in the harsh discipline. Bjørknes & Kiøbli (2012) posited changes toward positive parenting had an affirmative impact of behavioral factors related to the influence of divorce, depression, poor peer relations, and conduct issues. Generational transporting of negative actions may be due to poor attachment and bonding (Kopala-Sibley, Hayden, Singh, Sheikh, Kryske, & Klein, 2017). However, some children may break intergenerational patterns by decisively changing their attitudes, exposing themselves to corrective emotional experiences, and adapting alternative supportive caregiver's behaviors (Hillmann, Neukel, Hagermann, & Herpertz, 2016).
Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is believing in one’s ability to successfully carry out certain behaviors, exercise control over particular events (Coleman & Karraker, 1997). When parents encourage their children to work hard, work through challenges, and communicate high expectations, they are building self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy looks at evaluating one’s performance (Teti & Gelfand, 1991). Parents view self-efficacy messages as affirming belief in their child’s abilities (Suizzo, Rackley, Robbins, Jackson, Rarick, & McClain, 2017). Studies by Finken and Amato (1993), Johnson (2016), and Lutenbacher (2002) provided insights into parental roles involving self-esteem, self-efficacy, and caretaking abilities. Specifically studying maternal self-esteem, researchers noted the correlation for predicting parenting behavior and child outcomes. Examples of correlational concerns include how low maternal self-esteem and self-efficacy are closely associated with increased maternal anger, strict parental control, parental motivation, cognitive resources, and child behavior problems (Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Finken & Amato, 1993; Johnson, 2016; Lutenbacher, 2002). Additionally, higher ratings of self-esteem/self-efficacy lead to greater engagement in adaptive parenting behaviors such as parental sensitivity, improved problem-solving skills, and awareness of infant needs (Coleman &. Karraker, 1997; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). Roskam, Brassart, Loop, Mouton, & Schelstraete (2015) suggested the mother’s beliefs about self-efficacy influences externalizing behaviors strongly influencing her children. Chen & Conrad (2001) added the concept of the mother’s view of her ability to parent. The infant-child relationship reflects a woman’s self-esteem as a mother. A birthing experience that did not meet the mother’s expectations may negatively affect the self-concept of the mother and alter the maternal-child relationship (Chen & Conrad, 2001). Maternal-child bonding has a long-term influence on child development and may influence the mother’s ability to care for the
Additional studies focused on parental self-esteem/self-efficacy such as Coleman & Karraker’s (1997) and Yang’s (2011) research regarding concepts of self-confidence, self-evaluation, self-respect, and self-deprecation under the term “global self-esteem,” and psychological hardiness (the stamina and ability to meet the challenging elements of parenting). Yang posited a strong correlation between positive parental self-esteem and parent-child relations for both mothers and fathers. The correlations between parental self-esteem and parent-child relationships hold importance due to the association between maternal self-esteem and children demonstrating behavioral problems (Finken & Amato, 1993; Johnson, 2016), risk of child abuse (Gray, Spurway, & McClatchey, 2001), and parental depression (Gross, Conrad, Fogg, & Wothke, 1994; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). However, Coleman and Karraker (1997) and Meunier & Roskam (2009) noted self-efficacy beliefs of parenting are multidirectional and complex as numerous factors affect parenting competence and child development. There is only limited research regarding ongoing studies of parents who have little self-efficacy regarding parenting (Coleman & Karracker, 2003). The researcher intended to strengthen the clarification of the linkage between self-efficacy and parental responses.

When a parent perceives a child’s behavior as difficult or temperamental, and there is evidence of low maternal self-esteem/self-efficacy, the parent-child interactions may become challenging and lead to confrontational responses. Prior researchers connected negative and disruptive behaviors by parents toward their children to increased externalizing problems (Coleman & Karracker, 1997, Eisenberg et al., 2005; Garstein & Fagot, 2003; Meunier & Roskam, 2009; Olson, Sameroff, Kerr, Lopez, & Wellman, 2005). Patterson and Yoerger (1997) recognized self-regulation in younger children reduce the possible occurrence of problem
behavior, poor academic adjustment, truancy in later years, and issues with the legal system. Buckner, Mezzacappa, and Beardslee (2010) found better academic performance, mental health, and the ability to adjust to stressful situations in self-regulated children. Wilson, Havighurst, & Harley (2014) claimed affirmative interactions contribute to fathers, like mothers, have a significantly positive influence on their child’s development. I will address paternal influences further in the following chapters.

Criticism is extremely important and has a significant effect on parental behaviors and communications (Luthar, Barkin, & Crossman, 2013). Scharf and Rousseau’s (2017) investigated the influence of young adult’s parenting expectations of themselves. Their data showed the influence of non-parenting on young adult’s level of confidence in their personal parent experiences. Characteristics focused on during the study included expectations about self as a parent, concerns regarding the future child, and the future parent-child relationship. Findings regarding non-parent participant’s attachments styles, levels of self-trust, and trust in others more relevant than their perceived ability to relate to a child (PARC). The outcomes reflected their confidence level. Their perceived competences affected their expected level of communication with their future child.

Researchers also looked at the relationship of maternal self-esteem, psychopathology, cognitive structures, and parenting behaviors on childhood outcomes (Bugental & Johnston, 2000; Goodnow, 1988; O’Connor, Heron, Golding, Beveridge, Glover, 2002). Following cognitive effects, a 2011 study on Parent Talk and Preterm Infant Vocalization showed positive responses from the baby when positive verbalization takes place (Caskey, Stephens, Tucker & Vohr, 2011). Another study of verbal/nonverbal and congruent/non-congruent communication messages affected the development and personality of preschool children (Kuhn, 1989). The
authors also noted how children perceive incongruent messages as negative, thereby contributing to an unfavorable view on their abilities (Bugental et al., 1971; Burgoon & White, 1997; Jacob & Eccles, 1992; Noller, 1982; Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982). The outcomes of the aforementioned studies support the importance of early recognition of parental messages to be clear and free of mixed signals to be of benefit for the child (Bugental et al., 1971; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & McNulty, 1992).

**Family Interactions and Communications**

Family interactions are an integral part of communication (DesJardin, Doll, & Stika, 2014; Gottman, Murray, Swanson, Tyson, & Swanson, 2002; Pomerantz, 1984). Parents enhance their competence by learning techniques to promote language learning and acquisition (DesJardin, 2006). Verbal and nonverbal communication are both important in parent-child communication. The simplest forms of expression, such as smiles and frowns, communicate important non-verbal messages (Krumhuber & Manstead, 2009). Determining the context and intent of the expressions depends on how someone receives the message and their relationship to those communicating. In a sample of congruent/incongruent conversations, Grebelsky-Lichtman’s (2014) results indicate that verbal and nonverbal communication is the presence or absence of support and challenge. The researchers conveyed how harsh parenting in the form of open verbal abuse and hostility as more detrimental than physical punishment, which some considered the norm (Evans, Simon, & Simon, 2012). Children view verbal abuse as a form of rejection, which alters the child’s perception and expectations of how parents should provide a nurturing, safe, and secure environment. Derogatory and intentionally mean comments from parents may be damaging for a child (Evans et al., 2012). Larsson et al. (2008) posited a strong relationship between parental harshness, expressed negativity, anger, and criticism with
antisocial behaviors displayed by their children.

**Parental Support and Challenge**

Parental support enhances and promotes a child’s autonomy (Grebelsky-Lichtman, 2014, 2014a). Harsh communication may have far-reaching developmental and social effects. Researchers recognize verbal abuse as a stronger predictor of child conduct problems when compared to corporal punishment (Evans et al., 2012).

Childhood aggression is a serious mental health concern. Prior researchers documented that aggressive behaviors in young children, if left untreated, may become a lifelong concern (Urbain-Gauthier & Wendland, 2017). Maladaptive parenting, including harsh discipline, maternal attitudinal inflexibility, and limited positive interaction with the child, were strong indicators of physical aggression (Baydar & Akcinar, 2018; Nuttman-Shwartz, 2017; Wert, Mishna, Trocomé, & Fallon, 2017).

Maladaptive parental practices have high associations with the offended children leaning toward delinquent and criminal behavior as they become older. African American youth have higher risks for antisocial behaviors than their Euro-American counterparts (Evans et al., 2012). Therefore, parents should pay greater attention to early parent-child interactions with respect to incidents of child behavior problems (Evans et al., 2012). Harsh parenting in the form of inconsistent and coercive parent-child interactions foster and reinforce child misbehavior (Dawson-McClure, Calzada, Huang, Kamboukos, Rhule, Kolawole, …Brotman, 2015). On the other hand, parenting that supports autonomy and positive communication has a positive effect on child development (Dawson-McClure et al., 2015).

**Supportive Learning Environment**

Locke’s (1689) concept of “tabula rasa” (blank slate) describes how parents and the
community might imprint their beliefs, attitudes, and values upon children. As parents work to establish a progressive home environment, creating opportunities to have positive interactions, their engagement efforts may influence development, education, and childcare outcomes. The potential impact for growth and informed outcomes starts as early as a toddler to preschool stages (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Duncan, Dowsett, Claessens, Magnuson, Huston, Klebanov, … Japel et al., 2007; NELP, 2008). The timing of focused interventions is significant due to the child’s expected level of academic competence. Reviewing past performance data has closely predicted the patterns for later academic success for students (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Duncan et al., 2007; NELP, 2008).

Supportive environmental learning interventions during preschool years highlighted the positive influence occurring beyond the elementary stages (Bradley, Corwyn, McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001; Duncan et al., 2007). Authors viewed interventions at this stage and age as more influential than those occurring during the toddler years (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). Parental interventions for school success are likely to spark motivation among parents across cultures when academic achievement is at risk. Focused and positive plans engaged early in the child’s life, yield long-term benefits. Resource constraints such as parenting, poverty, and child behavior regulation are resource constraints and jeopardize self-regulation, influences school failure, and encourages deviant peer associations.

Lomanowska et al. (2017) found that parents bring their personality and personal experiences into their parenting practices. Despite parental exposure(s) to extreme adversity such as physical abuse, various mitigating factors could change the trajectory of negative parenting outcomes. Most abused parents do not become abusers; however, children who grow up neglected or abused by their parents are at risk for developing various unhealthy behaviors and
may become less equipped to handle adversity in adulthood (Lomanowska et al., 2017).

Hackworth, Berthelsen, Matthews, Westrupp, Cann, Ukoumunne, …Nicholson, (2017) focused efforts on exploring interventions designed to strengthen the teaching/learning home environment through parental verbal responsiveness (such as listening, talking, turning in, following the child’s lead). They noted positive improvements within the household resulting from coaching to increase these parental practices (Hackworth et al., 2017). Another aspect of parental environmental influences was a study completed by Fivush (2007) on reinforcing children’s ability to understand their emotions and learn life narratives. Children established reinforceable skills, which aligned with the primary relationship at a young age, typically around the end of preschool.

**Executive Functioning**

Meuwissen and Carlson (2015) defined executive functioning (EF) as higher-level thinking skills that employ mental flexibility, working memory, and inhibitions. EF develops rapidly during the preschool years with maturation through the adolescent years. Meuwissen & Carlson (2015) also suggested parents can influence their child’s EF across their lifespan by the way they conduct early child-parent interactions. Autonomous support, parental guidance promoting task mastery, and control is an important part of parenting, which can predict a child’s EF. A study conducted by Lorber, O’Leary, and Kendziora (2003) on maternal executive function, harsh parenting, and child conduct highlighted several concerns for children three to seven years of age. When parents face less than agreeable behaviors from their children, the parent’s responses correspond with their appraisal of the situation. During this process, parents who regulate their thoughts and behaviors can thereby use interventions that address the perceived problem appropriately. In other words, parents should control their behaviors before
managing those of the child (Lorber et al., 2003). Patterns of harsh (defined as angry, hostile parenting behaviors), create negative parental responses and the child’s problem behavior will likely increase (Deater-Deckard et al., 2012; Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1990; Patterson & Yoerger, 1997). Barrett and Fleming (2011) posited the ability to manage anger and frustration in the parent-child relationship supports the mental functioning level of the parent. This emotional and thought regulation process is better than parenting that merely reacts to aversive stressors (Baddeley, 1998; Barrett, Tugade, & Engle, 2004: Ochsner & Gross, 2008). Other researchers reported how chaos in the parent-child relationship and within the family affected the cognitive function, behavior, and overall development of children (Coldwell, Pike, & Dunn, 2006; Deater-Decker et al., 2012). Deater-Deckard et al. (2012) argue that there is a gap in the literature regarding parent’s executive functions toward regulating harsh parenting and chaotic constraints.

A recent study by Wilson and Gross (2018) addressed concerns regarding the assumption parents who prioritized, organized, and controlled activities supported academic successes for their children. The efforts by parents included students from preschool through high school years. The above assumption takes for granted how parents operate with a certain degree of executive function. Lowe & Dotterer (2013) documented a positive correlation between parent engagement and student motivation. Wilson & Gross (2018) further confirmed that when the desired skill levels are not present, the parents’ efforts and responses may be interpreted as their lack of interest, involvement, or willingness to be an educational partner for the child. The researchers determined how parents showing an inability to fully engage their working memory, make appropriate task selections, or revise action plans according to situations usually have limited high-order functionality. Parent’s ability to respond cognitively to their needs affects a child’s learning. When there is a deficit in cognitive responses to a child, researchers suggested
the existence of a link between EF and negative parental behaviors. A child’s negative behavior and emotional response may represent inconsistent and overactive discipline. Because EF capacity is fluid, fluctuations by developmental and psychological factors may affect the parent’s ability to meet the school’s expectation of active parental involvement and support. Adaptable factors such as sleep, rest periods, and mood affect parental EF (Wilson & Gross, 2018).

**Nurturing Environment and Parenting Styles**

Baumrind (2005) recognized parenting styles as authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and disengaged. Parenting styles identify characteristics of the parent-child relationship. Parenting behaviors typically rest around ideas of responsiveness (parents attuned to and supportive of meeting a child’s needs) and demandingness; claims parents make through behavior control and monitoring (Baumrind, 1971, 2005; Beckerman et al. 2018). Authoritative parenting embraces high responsiveness to a child’s needs while consistently setting appropriate boundaries. Outcomes associated with these parenting styles are strong self-esteem, positive social skills, fewer mental health concerns, and lower childhood delinquency. The authoritarian style includes unresponsiveness, strict rules/discipline, high expectations, and unquestionable obedience. Child responses to authoritarian parenting result in low academic performance, increased mental health issues, poor self-esteem, and limited social skills. Permissive parents display warmth, responsiveness, enforce fewer rules, and extend leniency. Children may respond to this relaxed approach by exhibiting impulsive behavior, self-centeredness, poor social skills, and relationship conflict. Neglectful/dismissive parents display behaviors such as aloofness, unresponsiveness, uninvolved, and indifferent. Children generally respond to dismissiveness with impulsiveness, suicide, delinquency, and substance abuse (Afifi et al., 2017; Ainsworth, et al.,1978; Baumrind, 2005; Beckerman et al., 2018; Bowlby, 1969).
Goffin et al. (2018) recognized an atmosphere that provides safety, security, assurance, comfort, openness to exploration, and caregiver availability as nurturing, positive, and receptive, which may lead to cooperative parent-child relationships. Parents and families influence the children’s development of certain traits within the child and those in the child’s environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Super & Harkness, 1986; Weisner, 2002). A nurturing environment supports healthy brain and body development. Caregiver’s relationships also affect emotional, social, cognitive, and physical growth (Atkinson et al., 2013; Shonkoff, 2011). Parental support and scaffolding increase the child’s independence, competence, emotional regulation, and problem-solving abilities over time (Leerkes, Blankston, O’Brien, Calkins, & Marcovitch, 2011). However, Shonkoff (2011) posited the need for additional research on evidence-based interventions targeting the mother’s ability to understand her young child’s emotional states. Moreover, Bean et al. (2006) showed the outcomes of conflicting thoughts on parenting style, academics, and youth depression. Bean et al. (2006) highlighted the presence of mixed findings associated with parental behavioral and psychological controls as both have the potential for positive and negative outcomes. Borelli et al. (2017) emphasized the influence of positive parenting patterns on building secure foundations for cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, and academic development for children.

In addition to studies, which recognize how parental interactions and behaviors affect the lives of children, Bartkowski and Wilcox’s (2000) findings highlighted another area of concern. Conservative Protestant parents strongly favor an authoritarian parenting style. Conservative Protestant parents strongly favor an authoritarian parenting style. Conservative Protestant parents viewed parents who employ yelling as a disciplinary tool as potentially harmful to children and the abusive use of their power (Capps 1992; Gordon 1989; Greven 1992; Lifton & Strozier 1990;
Bartkowski & Wilcox (2000) confirmed the inclination of conservative Protestant parents to show love and affection toward children yet view corporal punishment as an appropriate form of discipline. However, Bartkowski & Wilcox (2000) viewed verbal reproof and yelling as intimidation and a form of unacceptable discipline. The examiner intended to provide an opportunity for researchers to further investigate the outcomes of an alternative form of disciplinary interaction within the family (Hemenway, Solnick & Carter, 1994; Kelly & Tsen 1992; Parke & Slaby 1983; Thompson, McLanahan, & Curtin 1992). Researchers interpreted the authoritarian form of parenting as being harsh, punitive, and demeaning. Authoritarian behaviors negatively affecting self-esteem, leads to emotional problems, and unfavorable challenges in scholastic performance for younger children (Baumrind, 1967, 1971; Elder, Nguyen, & Caspi 1985; Larzelere, Klein, Schumm, & Alibrando, 1989; Parke & Slaby 1983; Straus, Sugarman & Giles-Sims, 1997). In dissimilarity to yelling and the untoward effects from authoritarian behaviors, Wilcox (1998) recognized the affirmed expressions of love, affection, and positive nurturance by parents toward their youngsters. Also affirmed is the concept that an authoritarian parental relationship has minimum expressions of affection and low levels of responsiveness (Bartkowski & Ellison, 1995; Wilcox 1998).

Contrasting the authoritarian approach, Healy, Sanders, and Iyer (2015) presented the significance of how emotional development necessitates maturational abilities for children. Socialization by parents and others in their sphere of influence help children learn to understand, express, and manage their emotions functionally and adaptively. Not only does parental socialization affect their adaptive abilities, so does the biological traits and socialization of others in their environmental circle has an impact as well. The ultimate goal of childhood maturation is learning to express and regulate various emotions in a socially appropriate manner (Sanders et al,
Child Emotional Needs and Self-Esteem

Parents possessing limited responses to their child’s emotional needs, children’s responses, typically respond with anger, sadness, depression, and poor social functioning. Parents who dismiss and invalidate their child’s emotions provide the groundwork for ineffective skills development for emotion regulation. Sanders et al. (2015) asserted that parents’ expectations about their child’s emotional competence change as the child ages. The latency period between middle school and adolescence has an impressive surge in depressive manifestations in youth.

Low support, intense control, hostility, rejection, and anger exhibited by parents toward their children lead to increased anxiety for the child (Ainsworth, 1989; Ainsworth & Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Rapee, Kennedy, Ingram, Edwards, & Sweeney, 2010; van der Voort et al., 2014; Viana & Rabian 2008). Children characterized as experiencing high anxiety and harsh, authoritarian parenting at age six also showed high anxiety at age three (Meyer, Proudfit, Bufferd, Kujawa, Laptook, Torpey, & Klein, 2015). Jones et al. (2015) indicated that children’s genetic makeup influences attachment as well as parental responses. Children are also susceptible to parent-partnering relationship interactions that may contribute to stress and anxiety.

Park and Park (2015) argued the influence of parental responses may be seen in self-esteem issues and problematic behaviors among elementary school students may be the result of faulty parent verbal interactions within the family system. Self-esteem varies among fourth and fifth graders and first and third-graders due to increased stressors and increased level of awareness for the higher-grade students (Park & Park, 2015). There are fewer studies available
regarding self-esteem and problem behaviors for this particular age group. The information deficit among fourth and fifth graders lend support for further study to address parental conversations and the potential influence on middle school-age students. The current study on parents/guardians of second and third-graders could contribute to outcomes of future studies for the next age group.

Park & Park (2015) identified a positive correlation between time spent with parents, relationships with the parents, and problematic behaviors in school children. Since most of the schools do not resolve problematic behaviors, they may progress throughout the child’s academic life. The final analysis of data recognized the need for more research on the relationship of self-esteem, peer attachment, parent interactions, and home environment as they impact school children’s behaviors.

A major challenge of parenting is helping children learn to function well in society. The task of fitting in with society includes parents sharing goals, rules, values, and social skills. Parents, at times, must focus not only on what society wants but what they (parents) want and expect from children, such as strong parent-child relationships. Balancing the expectations and consequences of child behavior and parental responses call for recognizing the influence of child characteristics such as age, abilities, and motivations (Grusec, Danyliuk, Kil, & O’Neill, 2017). Parents send various messages such as those associated with specific tasks; children receive process and respond accordingly. Parents who are sensitive to their child’s perspective have a better chance of identifying reasons and interpretations of the child’s misbehavior. A change in perspective supports parents engaging in appropriate interventions that may facilitate compliance (Grusec et al., 2017; Grusec, Hastings, & Mammone, 1994).

Parental conversations are a significant component of family interactions. These
conversations share information about perceptions, understanding, and expectations concerning the child’s overall level of functioning and the parent’s view of the conversational interactions. Bus and van Ijzendoorn & Pellegrini (1995), Entwisle and Hayduk (1988), Galper, Wigfield, & Seefeldt (1997), also considered findings on parent’s beliefs in and expectations of academic performance and their environmental factors as important. Conclusions asserted listening skills, vocabulary, reading, and writing skills improve when parents are positively engaged with their children (Frijters, Barron & Brunello, 2000; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Evans, Shaw & Bell, 2000).

**Academic Expectations and Influences**

Parent’s beliefs and expectations play a significant role in the school performance of children (Murphy, 1992). Researchers emphasized an academic advantage when parents are supportive and encouraging. Building a child’s self-esteem, self-confidence, self-concept, and self-reliance has proven to be academically beneficial for students (Cummings, 1986; Epstein, 1987; Mah, 1995; Perry, 1993, Slaughter & Epps, 1987). A positively supported home environment leads to educational success. Children often have unrealistic performance views about their abilities during early school years (Anuola, Leskinen, Onatsu-Arvilommi, & Nurmi, 2002). As children get older, their views become more negative and more realistic. Feedback from teachers and peers influence student performance (Dweck, 2002; Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002). As previously mentioned, student influence depended primarily on parents and/or caregivers’ input during the earliest school years. Nonetheless, parental verbalization remains impactful during most academic years. However, Andriessen et al., (2006), speculated about how students may also benefit from setting their own learning goals and may receive task motivation outside of their home environment.
Socialization and discipline strategies require careful engagement and administration. As developmental stages emerge, the communication dyad between parent/home and the child begins to change. As a child grows, so does his/her circle of social connections. Developing a secure attachment relationship that facilitates compliance moves beyond the confines of home (Grusec et al., 2017). As children grow, school plays a significant role in daily interactions as other adults begin to establish trusting relationships based on academic roles (Grusec et al., 2017; Ryan & Adams, 1995; Scaringello, 2002). This transition period focuses on adolescents and the coexistence of home and school. Adolescents become more independent, and their self-concept, self-exploration, and views of family begin to expand and change (Wentzel & Battle, 2001; Harter, 1983; Kreppner, 1992). As the child’s environment expands to include other influences outside the home (such as faculty, other students, and parents), opportunities to exercise higher levels of self-esteem from a secure attachment relationship may evolve.

Parents may choose to improve communication with children by encouraging them to do better in school and give them affirmative feedback. Self-perception comes from the interaction of the environment through affirmation, encouragement, and bolstering the child’s esteem and confidence (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Eccles, Adler, Futterman, Goff, Kaczala, Meece, & Midgley 1983; Gniewosz, Eccles & Novack, 2014; Kirby & Hogan, 2007; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). The words spoken to a child in their environment are critical to their development (Hackworth et al., 2017).

**Influence of Ethnicity**

Ethnicity also plays a role in parental communication. Researchers documented how the warmth and acceptance shared within families of African American children is a relative indicator of social adjustment, academic achievement, self-esteem, and depression (Bean et al.,
2003; Kim, Brody & Murry, 2003; Mounts, 2004; Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Zapert & Maton, 2000). Stevenson, Lee, Chen, Stigler, Kitamura, & Hatano, (1990) and Wentzel (1998) found African American and Hispanic parents held the same values and educational aspirations for their children as do non-minority parents. Including cultural differences and practices may contribute to understanding parent and student behaviors along with academic performance. However, there are different opinions on parenting styles and school achievement. Research has indicated higher levels of school achievement correlated with authoritative (warm and supportive emotional climate) parenting styles (Spera, 2005). Nevertheless, findings are not consistent when considering ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status. Understanding varying parental socialization processes merits further investigation (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Discussions by Cokley (2002) and Steele (1992, 1997) argued that the academic environment uncovers the devaluing of African American children and youth. When children see the academic arena as non-supportive of their self-concept, they seek other means of finding positive feelings (Steele, 1997). The emotional and social outlook students develop in grade school may follow them through their high school years. Educator's and parent’s perceptions regarding student abilities could become inflexible as well. By eighth and ninth grades, teachers see African American males more negatively than females, and academic decline is more dramatic for males than females. Researchers also noted how low academic performance for middle school males predicted continued low academic performance later in life for African American males (Greene & Mickelson, 2006; Roderick, 2003). One study on the thoughts of academic usefulness for African American high school students showed a positive association toward seeing the value of academic work. How these students view themselves academically correlated with pursuing future academic goals (Saunders, Davis, Williams, & Williams, 2004). Numri (1991, 2005) and
McCabe and Barnett (2000) conjectured how future orientation should include what students think, desire, expect, and believe. Education plays a major role in their future views, especially for students struggling with negative events and circumstances. The future allows the student to dream and wish for something better. Parents are a significant part of their future orientation. Serving as role models, fostering positive attributions, and setting norms for values, interests, and goals, parents are their cornerstones. Encouraging and equipping parents with tools to support dreams and aspirations may have significant positive results in home and school settings.

Another important component of future educational orientation is ethnic identity, especially for African American adolescents. Bergin & Cooks (2002) assessed a group of high academic achieving minority high school students who refused to deny their ethnicity to do well scholastically. Their ethnic identity protected them from feeling pressured to behave differently than they saw themselves (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003). Additional researchers discussed how strong ethnic identity is associated with positive psychosocial behaviors in later academic, social, and emotional settings (St. Louis & Liem 2005; Yasui, Dorham, & Dishion, 2004). When young students feel their ethnic group aligns with their values and academic achievements, they have better scholastic outcomes. Researchers suggested positive relationships between a youth’s future academic expectations, parent level of education, parent expectations, and the messages parents give to their children as significant factors in determining their futures (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006; Gutman & Midgley 2000; Kerpelmann, Shirrner, & Ross-Griffin, 2002; Smith, Schneider, & Ruck, 2005; Wilson & Wilson 1992). Furthermore, Davis-Kean (2005) noted parents’ educational achievement and that of their children closely relate to their expectations and beliefs regarding academic outcomes. Their words of encouragement positively influence their child’s educational and social pursuits.
Pardini, Fite, and Burke (2008) looked at the relationship between parenting practices, conduct problems, and academics regarding ethnicity. Children actively engaging in oppositional conduct behaviors tend to draw similar responses from their parents. These parental behaviors convey how children experience hostile verbal reprimands and physical punishment. As children recognize the parents’ aversive responses, their counteractions become more intense in attempts to control parents’ behaviors. In other words, parental conduct becomes more intense, leading to the children’s responses escalating, which results in a cycle of reciprocal poor parent-child communication. Children learn to avoid request/attempt to control their behaviors by increasing their intensity and thereby fatiguing/frustrating parents into retreating from their attempts to alter the child’s behavior (Pardini et al., 2008).

Kerpelman et al. (2007) studied conduct/response differences between African and European American families. In African American families, researchers noted non-abusive physical punishment as not directly associated with conduct problems; however, it consistently is associated with conduct problems in European American families. Pardini et al. (2008) revealed several gaps in the literature regarding ethnic differences in association with parent involvement, positive reinforcement, and later conduct problems. They also suggested the influence of youths’ conduct problems affected parenting behaviors across time (Pardini et al., 2008).

Supportive parenting is a universal dynamic, as upheld by studies involving African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and European families (Barber et al., 2005; Manongondo & Garcia 2007; Stice, Ragan, & Randal, 2004). As minority African American children may experience restrictions in overall community resources, positive parental-child relations remained important (Grant, O’Koon, Davis, Roache, Poindexter, Armstrong, Minden, & McIntosh, 2000; Zimmerman et al., 2000). Researchers shared other findings relating to ethnicity among Asian,
Asian American, Euro, and African Americans. Jackson-Newsom, Buchanan, and McDonald (2008) suggested Asian and Asian American adolescents interpreted strict parenting as a positive interaction more so than European American adolescents. Korean youth also viewed parental control as negative. From the perspective of family harmony, Chinese populations weigh interest in obedience and strict control as birthed from their parents. However, European American families see this same response as submissive for children and give total control and authority to parents. Acknowledged by Hughes et al. (2006), ethnic minority families need to learn about the family process to counterbalance information shared by Eurocentric writings, which include emphasizing particularities of African American youth and parents.

**Situational Influences**

Parental relationships impact children socially, emotionally, developmentally, and educationally. Researchers stressed the effect of divorce on the entire family. Accepting attachment theory, securely attached children can explore their surroundings without fear or risk of severing the bonded relationship. Divorce disrupts the stability of a secure environment. There is a reduction in warmth, responsiveness, and effective communication, which may include harsh and coercive discipline (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1985). Researchers offer views suggesting quality parenting is associated with adolescents’ education, goals, aspirations, and engagement (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006; Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2001). Multiple studies document increased risk factors of external behaviors from children of divorced parents (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington, 1993) and the negative academic outcomes occurring later in life. There is a limited link between children internalizing problem behaviors and educational outcomes (Amato, 2001; Amato & Keith, 1991; Hetherington, 1993). However, some researchers revealed results,

Studies by Dweck (1999) and Mueller & Dweck (1998) posited praising children for intelligence (person praise) after achieving success had negative results. When the children failed to meet with success, they avoided difficult tasks that would challenge them, seeing their failure as a deficit in intelligence and ability. Praising children for their efforts toward solving problems (process praise) is not contingent upon the outcome, but the effort put forth. This student group began to choose more challenging tasks because their abilities were the focus and not their person. This praise type helps to build relationships, especially for early childhood educators (Driscoll, 2010; Driscoll, Mashburn, & Pianta, 2007).

Maternal/Paternal Involvement

As parents encourage and support children, their confidence grows as does their determination to achieve and become more intentional about their schoolwork (Barco, 2012; Grief & Grief, 2004; Hossain & Shipman, 2009). For children, a positive experience (verbal, physical, or emotional) can lead them toward constructive directions for the healthy development of their belief systems, self-worth, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Schunk, 1984). Snyder and Dillow (2012) posited adolescents in low-income families were more apt to struggle with academic achievement and drop-out than their middle-class peers. The stressors not experienced
by middle-class students are economic, safety, underperforming schools, inadequate resources for schools, and the necessities of daily life (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). Two important factors that help at-risk students to beat the odds of failure were positive attitudes and parental support (Jeynes, 2007; Swanson, Valient, Lemery-Chalfant, & O’Brien, 2011).

A different approach for additional studies on academic and social performance can look specifically at the influence of fathers’ involvement. Addressing the display of warmth and responsiveness from fathers, Allgood, Beckert, and Peterson (2012) along with Benhke, Plunkett, Sands, and Bâmaca-Colbert (2011), focused on social and emotional outcomes for young school-aged children. Given the limited available studies, Lowe and Dotterer (2013) found warmth from fathers’ moderated relationships between parent observation and school behavior encounters. Researchers acknowledged the positive and special influence on children’s’ achievement, but little is known about the mediation process. Students increase their motivation when they believe in useful values of tasks and believe they can accomplish those tasks (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Parents shape those beliefs and aspirations through their behaviors and messages they share with their children. Panter-Brick and Burgess (2014) postulated how involving fathers more prominently in childhood rearing practices improves social, physical, mental, and educational outcomes. The authors documented positive results when constructive associations with father-child and mother-child relationships, high quality of the parental relationship, and the balance of stressors and support the immediate family. On the other hand, there is limited data available on non-resident fathers (Lamb 2000). This future research opportunity opens the doors for additional studies regarding the fathers’ affect development when his presence takes on a warmer and more responsive role over time. Tamais-LeMonda and McFadden’s (2010) findings provide evidence low-income fathers participate in research less and are more likely not to live in the
homes of their children. This gap in the literature is supportive of this present study as it addresses the perception of parental efficacy. Offering an additional perspective, Suizzo et al. (2017) theorized fathers may have limited levels of education and little academic skills to help with schoolwork, yet they can still support, encourage, and share optimism, which positively affects self-esteem and academic performance. Parental dialogue may occur by the transactional communication model, which suggests a child’s characteristics determines how parents treat them or the flow of communication, which may follow the interactional communication model indicating gender determines the effect of parental treatment. Research has found support for both views (Leavelle, Tamis-LeMonda, Ruble Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2012). However, there is further investigation needed on how the influence of academic self-efficacy mediated relationships between a fathers’ warmth and an adolescents’ resolve for schoolwork (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002).

**Competence in Parenting Practices**

Caring for children activates parental emotional, intellectual, and physical commands (Coleman & Karraker, 1997). Parents may try to master the concepts of physical, emotional, and intellectual demands yet experiencing, gaining, and feeling competent about them is a very individualized notion (Ballenski & Cook, 1982; Bandura 1977; Dumka, Stoerzinger, Jackson, & Roosa, 1996; Gecas, 1989; Johnston & Mash, 1989; McLeod, Wood, & Weisz, 2007). Parents have self-perceived competence ideas regarding parenting practices as defined by and stemming from social learning theory (SLT) (Bandura, 1989; Bandura et al., 1996; Coleman & Karraker, 2003). The theory holds SEB comes from the personal history of achievements, experiences, and emotional awakenings (Bandura, 1977, Bandura et al., 1996). The roots of feedback come from childhood and interpersonal interactions. The parent uses his/her early interactional patterns in
their present parental interactions. These interpersonal behaviors also share the premise of attachment theory in that experiences early in life follow and influence behaviors throughout the lifespan (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Coleman & Karraker, 1997; Grusec et al., 1994). Looking forward to becoming a parent who is comfortable with the associated responsibilities and feeling competent in the parental role has positive effects on the relationship with children and others (Affonso & Sheptak, 1989; Lovejoy et al., 1997).

Parents may expect children to adopt and reflect their values and goals. Those reflections and adaptations could present through child behaviors. Mixed messages theoretically influence how the children later view their life satisfaction status (Gniewosz & Novack, 2014; Heady, Muffels, & Wagner, 2012). The way children perceive and understand messages may not always be what parents intended (Dogan, Conger, Kim, & Masyn 2007). Parents indirectly share their behaviors, spoken values, and aspirations with their children. What parents say, do, or imply may not be consistent with each other, leaving parental values unclear to the children (Lekes, Hope, Gouveia, Koestner, & Philippe, 2012). When children perceive parents’ comments as valuing achievement/performance more than valuing them, those feelings become internalized and impairs functioning (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Comments from parents that are harsh, negative, domineering, and focused on materialism tend to be associated with poor psychosocial outcomes and may highlight achieving parental values more important than just being their child (Dunsmore, Bradburn, Costanzo, & Fredrickson, 2009; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993). Parents have the choice of encouraging achievement without being critical of their children, an approach potentially more beneficial and supportive of achieving positive family unity (Cheng & Pomerantz, 2015; Spera, 2005).

Prior researchers documented the outcomes when parents criticize their children,
emphasizing goal acquisition, and not their efforts. There is evidence of the practice of goal orientation across all developmental domains (Madjar et al., 2015; Rice & Dellwo, 2002; Rice & Lopez, 2004). Not meeting their parents’ expectations may lead to increased anxiety and negative self-esteem (Dunsmore et al., 2009). When children’s fear of not being good enough or failing, negatively affects their overall well-being (Conroy 2003; Luthar et al., 2013; Sagar, Lavallee, & Spray 2009).

**Impact of Paternal Influence**

A study of parent attitudes and children’s perception of their academic competence raised the question of gender issues. Eccles et al. (1983) claimed maternal achievement attitudes as stronger than fathers in predicting the child’s self-concept. However, Phillips’ (1987) study found fathers’ educational belief system had stronger ties to the child’s self-perception. In contrast, both parents reportedly were more pleased with their daughters’ grades, even though there were no significant differences between girl/boy academic performances. Eccles et al. (1983) study focused on fourth graders, suggested boys had higher expectations of academic performance from their parents.

Barco (2012) looked closely at the attachment level of fathers, academic self-concept, and school performance. Grief and Grief (2004) and Lamb (1997) shared findings of a lack of appreciation for fathers concerning addressing school-related concerns but contributory in developmental research. North American researchers express more interest in the area of fathers and academic success (Biller & Lopez-Kimpton, 1997; Fagan & Iglesias, 1999; Grief & Grief, 2004; Pleck, 1997). McBride, Dyer, Liu, Brown, & Hong (2009) discussed the association between academic achievement and parental involvement, including communication and affection, which can promote the cognitive skills of children. Children who have emotionally
close relationships with their fathers tend to do well in developing problem-solving skills (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984). Researchers continue to expand the realm of study on father-child relationships and agree children attach to both fathers and mothers (Barco & Florin, 2009; Lamb, 1997; Le Camus, Labrell, & Zaouche-Gaudron, 1997: Paquette, 2004; Pleck, 1997). Two other studies with preschoolers found father-child relationships could predict associated anxiety behaviors, attention, participation, and cognitive activities (Main & Weston 1981). Very little research is available focusing on middle childhood-parent attachment relationships. The majority of available studies that focus on mother/father relationships with infants and preschoolers show results mediated by self-esteem, peer acceptance, and peer-relationships affect other future relationships (Liebermann, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999; Verschueren & Marcoen, 1999).

The roles of fathers potentially bear great significance yet may differ in their focus of mothers. Mother’s roles include teaching their children about experiences outside the home such as exploration, assertiveness, language, problem-solving, and performing academically (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004; Paguette, 2004; Rowe, Coker, & Pan, 2004; McGrath & Repetti, 2009). Similar studies conducted in Europe where they consider education as a social concern with private responsibility. Reviewing the time spent with their young children, French men spend less time with their children than do American Australian, Italian, and Danish fathers (Craig & Mullan, 2010). Concerns for family, respect, rules, and tradition carry more focused attention for French parents than American, Australian, Italian, and Danish (Suizzo, 2002). Societal advancement, material comfort, and school performance are long-range concerns for these perceived emotionally distant fathers (Sabatier & Lannergrand-Williems 2005; Suizzo, 2002). Nonetheless, Bowlby’s attachment, self-concept, and self-esteem remain closely associated with stable relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Cassidy, 1998; Verschueren &
Marcoen, 1999). Findings by Moss & Saint-Laurent (2001) highlighted children’s attachment relationships affect how they perceive themselves, their attachment figures, the way they explore their early childhood environment, their approach to learning, socializing, and their academic performance (Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003). These scholars identified the mediating role of academic self-esteem and attachment to fathers, which affects school performance. Academic achievement improves and enhances underachieving students’ belief in their abilities (Barco, 2012).

Conflict in Home and Academic Environments

Advancing studies for a parent, child, and academics, Timmons and Margolin (2015) looked at family conflict and school problems, using multiday and bidirectional interactions between parents and children. Their findings suggested conflictual adolescents’ experiences spillover conflict between home and school, usually occur in both places on the same day. Repetti (1994) and Repetti and Wood (1997) documented similar results while reviewing work stress and negative parent-child interactions with an expanded study by Flook and Fuligni (2008), Lehman and Repetti (2007), and Salamon, Johnson, and Swendsen (2011) to include adolescents’ school difficulties. Dotterer, Hoffman, Crouter, and McHale (2008), and Harold, Aitken, and Shelton (2007) data expanded focus on conflict and academics, found adolescents with disturbed home environments were 2-4 times more likely to have poor school performance. However, there is limited information on the conflict, family stress, and school issues for children and adolescents (Flook & Fuligni, 2008; Lehman & Repetti, 2007; Repetti, 1996; Salamon et al., 2011). The limited presence of research regarding family conflict and stress supports this current study. Training parents to alter their communication patterns could positively impact family conflict and foster parental engagement in academic outcomes.
Regarding some high school students, negative situations in their life’s spillover from home to school and school to home (Flook & Fuligni, 2008; Madjar et al., 2015). A mediating factor in daily interactions between family conflict and school-related problems is mood status. Negative attitudes and emotions at home may spillover in school and vice versa. Spillover interactions have less than favorable effects on concentration and motivation (Lehman & Repetti, 2007; Salamon et al., 2011)

**Summary**

Previous researchers revealed the influence of parenting practices on overall child development and growth (Bean et al., 2006; Frydenberg et al., 2014). Parental interventions should occur early in a child’s life (King, 1998; Dawson-McClure et al., 2015). Scott et al. (2013) discussed how, although parental physical punishment may be legally permissible in some areas, the effect on emotional development and behavior control in children remains questionable. Knerr et al. (2013) mentioned cultural discrepancies in viewing various parental disciplinary choices and suggested parents may be open to learning alternative techniques for parenting and addressing child behaviors.

Leichtman et al. (2017) suggested how meaningful parent-child conversations at home have a significant influence on academic performance and retention for children, even when parents have limited knowledge regarding the child’s academic experiences. Leichtman’s study (2017) found that parental self-efficacy beliefs were related to child behaviors (the child’s ability to exercise recall and elaborate on parent-child conversations and experiences) and suggested more studies to assess parental self-efficacy regarding parental outcomes. However, Bandura (1989) recognized how certain domain-specific measures of self-efficacy could predict actual behaviors (expecting self-inefficacy, futility, despondency).
Adler extensively studied parent-child interactions and parenting styles. He promoted democratic parenting strategies that would positively impact the home environment through changes in behaviors by both parent and child. Adler recognized the major role of parenting on child development (Gibson, 1999). STEP, an Adlerian parental education curriculum, was the selected training program for this study with parents of second and third graders. STEP is an education initiative established over 25 years ago. The program focuses on enhancing parenting skills using communication practices, which highlight mutual respect, cooperation, responsibility, and emphasize the importance of the parent-child relationship (Dinkmeyer et al., 1976). The program’s efficacy extends to parents of younger children and parental educational programs without regard to economic status or one’s ability to participate in the program (Gibson, 1999). Less effective parenting skills may lead to social, emotional, academic, and physical problems for children across their developmental stages and into adulthood (Lomanowska et al., 2017; Lozado et al., 2016). Parents hold differing beliefs about childrearing, and their beliefs influence both their behaviors and child outcomes (Brown & Whiteside, 2008; Crouch et al., 2017). Supporting parents in learning new skills in communication, teaching decision-making skills, and improving awareness of disciplinary options may lead to better outcomes for parents/guardians and the children they are raising. With the current trends in family challenges occurring daily (divorce, violence, academic failures, psychosocial issues, physical and emotional abuse, and neglect), helping families establish safe havens through employing effective parenting practices is essential in preparing for a more possibly productive, safe, and enjoyable family environment.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if participation in the STEP program changed parental communication patterns and self-efficacy. There is limited data addressing the change in communication patterns and self-efficacy following participation in STEP programs. A single-subject design was used in this study to investigate changes in parenting communication patterns and self-efficacy among parents with a child enrolled in the second or third grade (n=12). This study was conducted in a family counseling and training center. The SES, KPS, and Open-ended Questionnaire were administered pre and post-training participation, and responses on the SES and KPS were compared using the Wilcoxon signed ranks test.

Design

A single-subject design was chosen for this study. Single-subject designs are systematic, repeated, multiple observations of a client, dyad, or group to identify and compare relationships among variables (Heppner, Wampold, Owen, Thompson, & Wang, 2016). This design allows manipulation of the independent variable. The single-subject research assesses variables over time of one subject (Heppner et al., 2016).

Twelve parents/guardians of second and third-graders participants were selected for the study. The format was comprised of a single group, pretest/posttest design (Heppner et al., 2016; Warner, 2013). The pretest/posttest design was appropriate for this study to show changes in scores pre and post-training participation in the STEP program. Using this methodology, measurements were implemented to assess for changes in parenting communication patterns and self-efficacy.


**Research Questions**

The research questions for this single-subject study are:

**RQ1**: Does STEP training result in parental use of effective communication patterns?

**H₁**: After completing STEP training, parents will use effective communication patterns, resulting in changes in KPS responses.

**H₀**: After completing STEP training, parents will not use effective communication patterns, resulting in no change in KPS responses.

**RQ2**: Will the STEP program lead to a change in parental self-efficacy?

**H₂**: Parents participating in the STEP program will have increased self-efficacy, as evidenced by changes in the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), Open-ended Questions, and Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS).

**H₀**: Parents participating in the STEP program will not have increased self-efficacy, as evidenced by no changes in the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), Open-ended Questions, and Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS).

The independent variable in this study is the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting program. The dependent variables are parent communication patterns and parental self-efficacy.

**Participants and Setting**

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, 12 participants were recruited as participants from a family counseling and training center. All parents or guardians with children in second or third grade attending family counseling sessions at the training center received information pertaining to the study. The 12 parents/guardians agreed to participate in the group of eligible parent volunteers. As part of the inclusion criteria, each parent or guardian self-verified that their child was either a second or third grader. All participating parents/guardians
had children with age-appropriate cognition and no known learning disabilities. Each recruited parent/guardian was able to speak, read, and write English. The study was open to both male and female parents/guardians. No specific age, education, or socioeconomic status was a requirement for participation. Each parent/guardian completed the three pre and post-training surveys. Parent/guardian surveys/results remained confidential, as coding was used for tracking responses. The researcher administered the treatment at a local family counseling and training center, where written permission was granted by the center directors before training began.

**Instrumentation**

This study was a single group format using pretest/posttest responses. The measures included the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES), Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS), and Open-ended questions. The KPS and SES surveys have documentation of validity and reliability status. Warner (2013), shared the following definitions: Validity is the degree to which results from a study shows evidence of a causal connection between variables (X causes Y), the variable measures the purposed measurement. Reliability is the presence of consistency; the measure should yield the same results.

**Self-Efficacy Scale (SES)**

The Self-Efficacy Scale (SES) measures general levels of belief of self-competence. This 30-item instrument measures general expectations of self-efficacy not tied to specific situations or behaviors. The assumptions are that personal expectations of mastery determine behavioral change, which is an index of progress since expectations of self-efficacy should change during interventions. The reliability of this tool has fairly good internal consistency with alpha =.86 for the general scale and alpha .71 for the social subscale (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). This scale has good criterion-related validity by accurately predicting that people with higher self-efficacy
would have greater success than those who score low in self-efficacy in past vocational, educational, and monetary goals. The scale includes statements about personal attitudes and traits. Each statement reflects a common belief held about self (Corcoran & Fisher, 2013). An example of an SES statement is, “I give up on things before completing them, and I avoid facing difficulties” (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). A Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree is used. Coleman and Karraker (1997) theorized understanding behavioral competence, enjoyment in parenting response, and prevention of problematic parenting influences efficacious parental efforts to provide positive experiences for children. Parents’ response could show their degree of agreeableness toward parenting. Kerpelman et al. (2007) posited behaviors and aspirations influence one’s belief in their ability to achieve specific outcomes.

**Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS)**

The Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale (KPS) measures satisfaction with parenting, using only three items. This instrument measures parental satisfaction, the behaviors of one’s children, and the quality of the parent-child relationship (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). Studies have shown that this scale has good internal consistency with alpha range .78-.85 (Nitsch, Hannon, Rickard, Houghton, & Sharry, 2015). The scale has also been shown to have good concurrent validity correlating with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, having two studies of two-week test-retest reliability of .85 and .88 (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013; Nitsch et al., 2015). An example of the questions for this scale is: How satisfied are you with the behavior of your children? This instrument also uses a Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1= extremely dissatisfied to 7= extremely satisfied (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). A study by Nitsch et al. (2015) using KPS data showed significant changes in overall parent satisfaction regarding the Parents Plus Adolescent Program. KPS results contributed to a study by Morgan et al. (2013) and Power et al. (2009) on
parents and self-harm and suicidal behaviors in young people. Power et al. (2009) showed statistical significance for the parents of adolescents with suicidal behaviors participating in SPACE (Supporting Parents and Careers) program. KPS has been used with marital couples assessing parental satisfaction (James, Schumm, Kennedy, Grigsby, Schectman, & Nichols (1985).

**Open-Ended Questions**

This tool was created by the researcher to measure parental/guardian responses in the form of a pretest/posttest self-report. The three-question instrument permitted parents/guardians to share their perception of communication with their child, reflect on parenting skills, and recognize the potential influence on future parenting practices of their child. By using the pretest-posttest design, the intent was to identify changes in parental responses (Heppner et al., 2016, p.272).

**Procedures**

Data collection began after obtaining written permission from the IRB and the executive directors of the family counseling and training center. Upon receipt of the approval, the researcher distributed letters introducing the study to all parents/guardians of second and third-grade students receiving services at the counseling center and accepted the first twelve parents/guardians who volunteered and met criteria as program participants.

During the orientation session (one week before the study began), the researcher introduced the study, all participants completed the consent forms and verbalized their understanding of the training process. The investigator stored the forms and all documentation (using sealed envelopes), in a locked safe located in the director’s inter-office at the counseling center. The inter-office is secured, and the safe was placed in a locked cabinet, which required
separate keys to access. The examiner was the only person with key access to the cabinet and the safe.

Parents selected alphabet codes A through Q to ensure confidential communication for all survey responses. The researcher stored the attendance log and assessment code associations (alphabet codings) in the locked safe as well. The parent/guardians completed the Self-Efficacy Scale, Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale, and the Open-ended questionnaire before training began and at four weeks post-training. Using the Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) program, the researcher provided instruction to all participants on communication skills and parenting strategies incorporating practice and review sessions. All parents/guardians received a $10.00 gift card at the end of session one and entered a drawing for a $50.00 gift card at the end of the post-training session. The investigator requested all participants complete and reviewed their surveys for missing data before session one started, and session four ended. The researcher compared the pre and post-training surveys/questionnaires to determine if STEP training had any effect on participant responses.

The four-hour training took place over a seven-week period. The first session was 90-minutes, which included 30-minutes to complete the pre-training surveys. Sessions two and three were 60-minutes each (undertaken the second and third week). The investigator conducted the final session (one 30-minute session) four weeks after session three. During the last session, participants were allotted time to complete the post-training surveys, and the researcher addressed any questions or concerns that were presented. At the end of the training sessions, pre and post-training responses (KPS, SES, and open-ended questions) were prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

Using a Wilcoxon signed-ranks test, the investigator compared parental/guardian
responses before and after treatment. The Wilcoxon is the nonparametric equivalent of the paired t-test (Warner, 2013). The number of participants was small \((N = 12)\), therefore the data was unlikely to show a normal distribution, supporting the use of nonparametric analyses. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test does not require the data to exhibit specific characteristics of some statistical distribution (Warner, 2013). The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to analyze data from pre and post-training administration of the KPSS and SES. IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform the analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this single-subject study was to analyze whether education focused on parenting skills (particularly participation in the STEP program) could effect change in parenting communication patterns and parental self-efficacy. After receiving and verifying the consent forms, the training sessions commenced. The research questions for this study were: RQ1: Does STEP training result in parental use of effective communication patterns? RQ2: Will the STEP program lead to a change in parental self-efficacy?

Demographics

All participants were volunteers responding to the recruitment letters. Inclusion requisite was being a parent/guardian of a second or third-grade student. Parent/guardian participants were female and male. The twelve parents/guardians comprised of mothers (59%), father (8%), grandparent (17%), great-grandparent (8%), and aunt (8%). The group included African American (59%), Caucasian (8%), Asian (8%), and Latino (25%) ethnicities. Through general conversations, the noted age range was 27 through 74 years. Participants educational levels ranged from high school/GED (42%) through college attendance/graduation (58%).

Results

After all training sessions were completed, the researcher organized the data and used IBM SPSS software to analyze the pre and post-training responses. Data review was completed for SES and KPS using the Wilcoxon rank sum test (Warner, 2013). Coding was employed as a means for ensuring confidential pre and post-training responses. The study yielded a 100% participation rate (N=12). The study included participants of various ethnicities, an extensive age range, and a variety of educational milestones (which were not qualification criteria). Descriptive
statistics identified changes in participant post-training responses. Variables displaying post-training response changes were KPS (Parent-child relationship) and the Open-ended questionnaire (Self-reflection). The following sections offer in-depth data findings.

**KPS, SES, and Open-Ended Questions**

The Kansas Parenting Satisfaction Scale (KPS) showed no statistically significant change in pre and post-training responses for child behavior (How satisfied are you with your child’s behavior?) A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that a 4 week, once weekly parenting class did not elicit a statistically significant change in parent satisfaction with their child’s behavior (Median = .096), thus the null hypothesis was retained. There was no statistically significant change in self-reflection (How satisfied are you with yourself as a parent?) following a 4-week parent training class (held once per weekly). The null hypothesis was retained (Median = .062 per Wilcoxon signed-rank test). There was a statistically significant change in pre and post-training responses for the parent-child relationship (How satisfied are you with your relationship with your child?) following the 4-week training class (held once a week). The null hypothesis was rejected, as supported by a Wilcoxon signed-rank test (Median = .027). The significance level for the Wilcoxon signed-rank test is .05. (see Table 1).
### Table 1

**SES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of the difference between Related-Samples Pre-Training Plans and Post-Training Plans equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of the difference between Related-Samples Pre-Training Plans and Post-Problems equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.429</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of the difference between Related-Samples Pre-Training Job and Post-Problems equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of the difference between Related-Samples Pre-Training Difficult and Post-Problems equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of the difference between Related-Samples Pre-Training Difficult and Post-Problems equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Goals and Post-Training Goals equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Completing and Post-Training Completing equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Meet and Post-Training Meet equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Facing and Post-Training Facing equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Complicated and Post-Training Complicated equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.887</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.739</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.206</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training New and Post-Training New equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Friends and Post-Training Friends equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Unexpected and Post-Training Unexpected equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Learn and Post-Training Learn equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Failure and Post-Training Failure equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Social and Post-Training Social equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Insecure and Post-Training Insecure equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Person and Post-Training Person equals 0.</td>
<td>Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.577</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Null Hypothesis</td>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Abilities and Post-Training Abilities equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.655</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Give and Post-Training Give equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.887</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Capable and Post-Training Capable equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Note: SES is a series of statements about personal attitudes and traits. The statements represent commonly held beliefs.
**KPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Child Behavior and Post-Training Child Behavior equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training P-C Relationship and Post-Training P-C Relationship equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

Note: P-C Relationship: Parent-Child Relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of difference between Pre-Training Self-Reflection and Post-Training Self-Reflection equals 0.</td>
<td>Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.
Table 2

**KPS Descriptive Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.279</td>
<td>1.379</td>
<td>.888</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>1.697</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>.369</td>
<td>.398</td>
<td>.256</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>.490</td>
<td>.229</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

**Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test (KPS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Training Child Behavior</td>
<td>-1.667&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Training Child Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Training Self-Perception</td>
<td>-1.867&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Training Self-Perception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Training Parent-Child Relationship</td>
<td>-2.214&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Training Parent-Child Relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SES measures one’s personal attitude and traits, and commonly held beliefs. The 30-item survey included seven “filler” responses requiring zero-point assignment. The pre and post-training responses for the SES showed no statistically significant changes (Table 4). For SES scale the following research question and hypothesis were: RQ1: Does STEP training result in parental use of effective communication patterns? H1: After completing STEP training, parents...
will use effective communication patterns, resulting in changes in KPS responses.

Table 4

**SES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Nominal/Ordinal Code</th>
<th>Classifiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief in one’s own abilities</td>
<td>A=1</td>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B=2</td>
<td>Disagree moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C=3</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D=4</td>
<td>Agree moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E=5</td>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The assumptions for this instrument are personal expectations of mastering certain tasks determine changes in behavior, and individual differences in past successful experiences lead to varying levels of generalized self-efficacy (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013).
Table 5

Open-ended questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The median of differences between Pre-Training Communication and Post-Training Communication equals 0.</td>
<td>Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of differences between Pre-Training Self-Reflection and Post-Training Self-Reflection equals 0.</td>
<td>Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>Reject the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The median of differences between Pre-Training Parental Influence and Post-Training Parental Influence</td>
<td>Related Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Open-ended questions focused on whether variables are related causally or otherwise. Questions of if/whether variety may serve as the start of understanding the effects of things that occur in individual lives and the world (Hayes, 2013). A Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that a 4 week, once weekly parent training class (STEP) did extract a statistically significant change in self-reflection \( (p = .019, \text{Asymptotic significance level} = .05) \), thus the null hypothesis is rejected (see Table 5). Following the 4 week STEP training there were no statistically significant changes in communication \( (p = .877) \) nor parental influence \( (p = .396) \), thus the null hypotheses were retained (Table 5).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post Plans - Pre Plans</td>
<td>-0.264b</td>
<td>0.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Problems – Pre-Problems</td>
<td>-0.791b</td>
<td>0.429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Job - Pre_Job</td>
<td>-0.816b</td>
<td>0.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Difficult - Pre_Difficult</td>
<td>-0.816b</td>
<td>0.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Goals - Pre_Goals</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Completing - Pre_Completing</td>
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<td>0.619</td>
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<td>Post_Meet - Pre_Meet</td>
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<td>Post_Facing - Pre_Facing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post_Complicated - Pre_Complicated</td>
<td>-0.276d</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Interesting - Pre_Interesting</td>
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<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Unpleasant - Pre_Unpleasant</td>
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<td>0.739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Decide - Pre_Decide</td>
<td>-1.265d</td>
<td>0.206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_New - Pre_New</td>
<td>-0.632d</td>
<td>0.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Friends - Pre_Friends</td>
<td>-1.414d</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Unexpected - Pre_Unexpected</td>
<td>-1.051b</td>
<td>0.293</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.276b</td>
<td>0.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Failure - Pre_Failure</td>
<td>-1.633d</td>
<td>0.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Social - Pre_Social</td>
<td>0.000c</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Insecure - Pre_Insecure</td>
<td>-1.382b</td>
<td>0.167</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post_Person - Pre_Person</td>
<td>-0.557d</td>
<td>0.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Abilities - Pre_Abilities</td>
<td>-0.447d</td>
<td>0.655</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post_Give - Pre_Give</td>
<td>-0.142b</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post_Capable - Pre_Capable</td>
<td>-1.414b</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Post = Post-Training responses, Pre= Pre-Training responses.
**Table 7**

*Open-ended questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Point of focus</th>
<th>Response: Pre-training</th>
<th>Post-training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Talking to child</td>
<td>Hard, frustrating</td>
<td>Easy, meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>View of self as a parent</td>
<td>Tired, challenging</td>
<td>Better, peaceful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td>Needs of your child as a future parent</td>
<td>Don’t have kids</td>
<td>Be patient w/child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Example of participant’s pre and post-training responses
Results for the 30-item SES survey showed no statistically significant changes in pre and post-training responses following a 4 week, once weekly parent training class (STEP). Data analysis for SES showed Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) values ranging from 1.000 - .102. Thus, with the significance level of $p < .05$ the null hypothesis was retained.

**Summary**

Chapter four outlined the results of data collection that sought to explore the influence of the STEP program for parents/guardians of children in the second and third grades. Using the structured format, including surveys and open-ended questions, parents shared their anonymous responses. Data for the SES failed to reject the null hypothesis (parents participating in the STEP program will not have increased self-efficacy), as evidenced by no changes in the Self-Efficacy Scale (SES). The null hypothesis for the variable parent-child relationship (KPS) was rejected. The researcher identified several themes throughout this process. The theme for the SES survey was beliefs in self-abilities. The focal points for the KPS were child behavior, self-perception, and the parent-child relationship. The focal points for the open-ended questions were parental communication, self-reflection, and parental influence.

For this study, the intent was to answer two questions: Does STEP training result in parental use of effective communication patterns? Question two: Will the STEP program lead to a change in perceptions of parental self-efficacy? Upon data review SES responses (belief in one’s abilities) showed no statistically significant changes. However, data showed changes in parental responses for the parent-child relationship (KPS) and changes in responses for reflection of self as a parent (open-ended questions).
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine whether education focused on parenting skills could effect change in parenting communication patterns, self-efficacy, and self-perception. The instruments chosen for this study (KPS, SES, and open-ended questions) assessed pre and post-training parent/guardian responses. As children grow up, they typically adopt the same or similar behavior patterns as their parents (Schofield et al., 2017). During the initial and post-training sessions, the examiner collected all surveys and questionnaires for analysis. The ensuing chapter permitted the researcher to summarize, discuss implications, highlight delimitations and limitations, and offer recommendations for further research.

Summary of Findings

This study used a single-subject design to determine the effect of the STEP program on parental communication and perception of self-efficacy. IBM SPSS statistical software program was used to analyze data based on two overarching questions:

RQ1: Does STEP training result in parental use of effective communication patterns?

RQ2: Will the STEP program lead to a change in parental self-efficacy?

Participants completed three instruments pre and post participation in the STEP program. Upon the final collection of all pre and post-training tools, the investigator began data analysis employing the IBM SPSS program. There were no statistically significant changes in parental responses for the 30-item SES. Analysis of the three-item KPS showed statistically significant results in the area of the variable parent-child relationship. A review of the open-ended questionnaire revealed response changes noted for the variable self-reflection. KPS responses measuring satisfaction with self as a parent (self-perception), a child’s behavior, and the parent-
child relationship were analyzed using the pre and post-training responses. The variable parent-child relationship (Asymp. Sig.) = .027 (using a significance level of .05) which resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis was written as; parents participating in the STEP program will not have increased self-efficacy, indicative of no changes in SES and KPS responses.

The use of open-ended questions provided an avenue for parents/guardians to report their views on three themes pertinent to the parent-child relationship: communication, self-reflection, and parental influence. The open-ended questions were: Talking to my child is? (communication) Being a parent is? (self-reflection), and What would you tell your adult child about being a parent? (parental influence). Pre and post-training responses were examined using the anonymous alphabet coding system identified earlier in the study. Data showed changes in the post-training responses (84%) for the variable self-reflection.

**Discussion**

As summarized by Baydar et al. (2018) and Beckerman et al. (2018), negative parenting practices may lead to harsh parenting conduct. As mentioned earlier, the bidirectional parenting process influences child and parent behaviors. There is limited data available on changes in parental communication and self-efficacy after participating in the STEP program. Moreover, research is lacking concerning parents of this particular age group (second and third-grade students). There is a dearth in data addressing parental training for parents of younger children. Some researchers support the need for further investigation of parental communication and self-efficacy (Gibson, 1999; Scharf et al., 2017).

Parenting is affected by many variables, including social and cultural norms, parental support, education, and self-efficacy (Kim et al., 2014). There is a need for more research on the
effectiveness and sustainability of parental training programs (Chase et al., 2017; Frydenberg et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2008). This present study shared data that further contributes to lessening the gap in current literature regarding the influence of systematic training for parents/guardians of second and third graders. The response changes identified in the variable’s parental reflection and parent-child relationship may be deemed as noteworthy to influence parental training.

**Theoretical**

The STEP program has its foundation in the Adlerian theory. The guiding principles of Adlerian theory are meaningfulness, social interest, goals, purposeful behavior, conscious actions, and belonging. The STEP program uses the aforementioned principles, which encompass learning, practice, and self-reflection. The Adlerian theory is a growth model emphasizing taking responsibility for one’s behaviors (actions, decisions) and finding meaning in life (Corey, 2005). Confirmed by Dinkmeyer et al. (1997), becoming an effective parent requires training, whether you are a parent, grandparent, guardian, aunt, or uncle fulfilling the parental role. The STEP program focuses on mutual respect for the parent and the child as they move toward a democratic process of learning and thriving as a family unit. The purpose of the STEP program is to help parents reconsider their current parenting practices and explore other opportunities to better meet the challenges of parenting (Dinkmeyer et al. 1997). The results of the current study present data emphasizing the possible changes in communication and self-efficacy following participation in the STEP program.

**Implications**

A child’s development may be highly affected by parental practices in the home environment (Bögels & Brechman-Toussaint, 2006; Lowe et al., 2013). Acknowledging the significance of the well-being of children, Lorber et al. (2005) highlighted the challenging nature
of disciplinary choices that have the potential to elicit negative thoughts and emotions in parents. Due to the responses of the autonomic nervous system, parents/guardians may respond to behavior according to their emotions rather than the actual behavior of the child, which may lead to overactive discipline. Kirby et al. (2007) explained that learning to use love and compassion could influence a parent’s emotional reactivity.

Personality and patterns of behavior begin in early life and progress throughout development into adulthood, creating the basis for lifestyle beliefs. Because of the early development of lifestyle, one may not be aware of it nor of how heredity, family atmosphere, values, role models, position in the family, and methods of parenting sway lifestyles (Dirkmeyer et al., 1997). The STEP program may assist parents/guardians in understanding how their responses are connected with their lifestyles.

Parental lifestyle practices, traditions, and norms may be transitioned from childhood exposures to childhood enactments. Bernier et al. (2012) conceded that the quality of parent-child interactions has varied childhood outcomes (impulse control, executive functioning, and confidence in self-regulation). As children mimic their parents’ behaviors, certain family traits and choices do not have to persist. Changes in dysfunctional communication patterns and harsh parenting practices are possible. Godly wisdom provides alternative solutions to harmful disciplinary methods. Colossians 3:21 (New International Version, NIV) Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Ephesians 6:4 (NIV) Fathers do not exasperate (anger) your children and Isaiah 54: 13 (NIV) All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. Beckerman et al. (2018) also confirmed there is an association between parent stress and harsh, abusive discipline. This study may prove beneficial
in disrupting current and future faulty parenting practices, including parental communication patterns and perception of self-efficacy.

**Counseling Implications**

As children in the second and third grades may yet be easily swayed by their parent’s temperament, parents/guardians may respond to their child’s behavior out of past learned childhood behaviors (Kim et al., 2014). Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version, KJV) instructs parents/guardians to train up a child in the way he (she) should go; and when he is old, he (she) will not depart from it. Afifi et al. (2017) suggested there is a correlation between harsh physical punishment and child maltreatment. Research has also shown ineffective parenting practices tend to cross generational lines and become evident in transgenerational interactions (Kim et al., 2014; Kopala-Sibley et al., 2015). Likewise, mental disorders in adulthood have been argued to have roots in harsh physical punishment during childhood. Yet, history also documents that positive parenting skills are transgenerational. 2Timothy 1:3-5 (NIV) I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did … I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your other Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. Argued in previous studies (Baumrind, 1967; Kolblinsky et al., 2006; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Shelton et al. 1996) some youth may rise beyond the risk of negative outcomes (delinquency, depression, or aggression) despite their experiences in unhealthy parent-child relationships.

These analyses suggest that the participants retained similar pre and post-training responses regarding their parenting abilities. However, there were significant changes in their post-training responses for the parent-child relationship and parental reflection (see Tables 5, 7 & 8). Post-training data shows the participant’s comments as warm and responsive. These findings are closely aligned with the goal of the STEP program; to teach and encourage parents how to
live cooperatively with their child while using mutual respect and democratic principles as they employ alternative choices.

The current data introduces alternative solutions to parental practices that potentially lessen the repercussions of negative disciplinary practices. STEP training may offer windows of opportunity to invite positivity, warmth, confidence, and support into the lives of families and communities that could lead to breaking generational chains of conflict, pain, and possibly regret. Through efforts to shift parental communication and self-efficacy via empirically proven principles (i.e., STEP), child development, home stabilization, academic achievement, and community restructuring may yield the global revitalization of families. Statements often noted on roadside billboards, campaign slogans, and school campuses, “No child left behind,” could become a reality as counselors help parents learn effective communication practices and share strategies that foster beliefs in their abilities to skillfully execute their parental and guardian roles.

Limitations

The researcher used a single-subject study with no systematic group assignment (Heppner et al., 2016; Warner, 2013) to extend the current knowledge to determine the effects of a systematic parent training program. Lacking a nonrandomized approach, this could be seen as a limitation; random sampling allows each member of a population an equal chance of inclusion in the sample (Warner, 2013). Nonetheless, the single-subject design allows examples of evaluating the cognitive process of clients (Heppner et al., 2016). Participants were instructed on new information, given time to practice, and self-evaluate individual outcomes. Single-subject design is ideally noted for clients that are not homogenous or uniform (Hepper et al., 2016). This study included participants with varying ethnicities, ages, parenting experiences, and
educational accomplishments. This study design also allowed participants to exercise their thinking process, share plans, intentions, and means of reaching goals (Heppner et al., 2016). The above-mentioned information was exchanged via participant open-ended question responses and general dialogue throughout the training process.

Another limitation of the current study is the sample size (n=12). Although 15 participants were initially recruited, only 13 met recruitment parameters, and one of those could not meet the time commitment. Nonetheless, twelve parent/guardian participants completed the training. The study took place in a family counseling and training center where a limited number of families with second and third-grade students were available.

Notably, a limitation of this study includes training/session time. A question remains as to whether increased training session/time could alter the outcome. Also, this study included a single four-week time frame for post-training survey assessments. It is yet to be determined if a prolonged practice time would have been meaningful. Parry et al., 2018 recognized the mechanisms of change within persons participating in training programs are not greatly understood. Acknowledging an additional concern with the study was the limited number of male participants. A question of whether a greater presence of male participants (fathers/male guardians) would alter the study’s outcome? Suizzo et al. (2017) and Wilson et al. (2014) posited there is limited data available on fathers’ impact among families with young children. Conclusively, this study was restricted to a specific geographic footprint and English speakers. The geographic area where the study was conducted has a limited number of non-English speaking households, which may affect the generalizability.

**Recommendations for Future Research**
Future research might use an experimental design in order to show a more causative effect. Secondly, a larger participant group could improve the study’s statistical power and validity. Including participants from a broader geographic area and removing the language specificity may afford greater diversity. In conducting further research, following up with participants by performing a second extended timeframe to address the continued use of newly learned skills, could contribute to documenting whether parents/guardians continued to implement the skills learned during their involvement with the program. This study may also warrant additional investigation as part of a mandated education for appointed/assumed guardianship for non-parent guardians. The general conversation from participants broached this topic as some guardians had associates fulfilling parenting roles without any parenting experience. The availability of such parenting support could become better disseminated through local schools and community facilities. Supported by Golding (2000), parenting resources need to be broad-based, delivered within the community where the families live, and endorsed to create and enhance parenting strategies to undergird the parent-child relationship. Finally, including parents/guardians of students in all primary grade levels may offer additional data concerning parental responses toward children with expanding cognitive and social skills. When parents and guardians are prepared to meet the demands of their roles, at-risk parenting interactions may become less prevalent as coping skills and positive responses increase (Boppana & Rodriquez, 2017).
Summary

This study investigated parental communication patterns and self-efficacy pre and post participation in the STEP program. As mentioned earlier, conveying messages goes beyond using written or spoken words. An essential part of the communication process is educating the message sender and the receiver about the importance of nonverbal communication. Often what people say is not always what others hear. Therefore, sharing the effect of body language, innuendo, and silence have on dialogue is necessary when setting parameters to advance one’s conversational skills.

Parents may not be aware of how their behaviors and words they speak affect their child/ren’s development. Mixed messages and confused responses may lead to difficulties in the parent-child relationship. It is also vital for parents to recognize and even accept their contribution to impaired or fragmented interactions. The STEP program prepares parents to move beyond current practices that may hinder the parent-child relationship and move toward strategies that enhance both the parent and child self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. During the process of learning ways to change less effective parenting practices through teaching alternative interventions, Christian therapists continue to have proven methods of reaching others in meaningful ways. Proverbs 11:14 assures us, where there is no guidance, a person falls, but in an abundance of counselors, there is safety (Eastern Standard Version/ ESV). Also written confirmation for appropriate counsel is noted in Proverbs 19:200-21 (ESV) Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future. Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand. Helping parents to be confident in asking for and seeking help to navigate the waters of parenthood is a task requiring patience, persistence, and prayer. For the counselor and the parent/guardian, God allows us to be
vulnerable and realistic in attempts to make positive and lasting changes possible by asking him to direct our footsteps according to his word (Psalm 119:133, New International Version/NIV).

The focus of this study was to determine if STEP training would yield changes in parental communication patterns and perception of self-efficacy. It is important for parents to understand the strength and significance of their roles, though they may be challenging. How parents and guardian fulfill their roles has been cited as having a life-long impact (Dinkmeyer et al., 1976; Saba, 2005). Parents and guardians may not be prepared for all the intricacies of parenthood; however, help is available. Through biblical principles and sound clinical practices, effective parenting is possible when parents/guardians have a strong presence of self-efficacy, effectively communicate, and maintain a positive perception of self. Employing democratic parenting practices and strategies to enhance equality and mutual respect may positively change the current and future family dynamics. Data confirms that changes in parental self-reflection and the parent-child relationship did occur following STEP training.
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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 20, 2020

Janice Ringstaff
IRB Exemption 4142.012020: Parental Communication Patterns and the Impact on Younger Children

Dear Janice Ringstaff,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects;

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Grace Baker
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Parental Communication Patterns and the Impact on Younger Children

Janice Ringstaff

Liberty University

School of Behavioral Sciences

You are invited to be in a research study about how parents communicate with their children. You were selected as a possible participant because you have a child in the second or third-grade, you read, write and speak English. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Janice Ringstaff, a doctoral candidate in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

The purpose of this study is to determine if training focused on parenting skills can make a difference in how parents communicate and how parents feel about the job of raising children. The purpose of this study is to help parents meet the various needs that parenting presents and to feel positive and valued as they do so.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. You are being asked to attend three sessions. One session each week for three weeks. The 1st session is for 90 minutes which includes 30 minutes to complete 3 surveys/questionnaires; the 2nd & 3rd sessions are for 60 minutes each.
2. During the first session, you will be asked to complete three brief surveys before the session begins. Your responses will be confidential.
3. You will be asked to return 4 weeks after session # 3 to answer three surveys.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. I am required by law to report any information that I become aware of regarding child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

**Benefits:** Parents will become aware of how their communication and how they feel about parenting may affect their child’s overall growth and development. Parents may also gain understanding of how parenting practices are passed down to future generations.

Parenting is more than providing food, clothes and shelter. What we share and experience in the home, impacts our schools, communities, our world. Preparing children to face things with greater confidence, better health, and better decision making starts when parents feel more secure, supported, and prepared themselves.

4. **Compensation:** Participants be compensated for participating in this study
5. At the end of the 1st session, each participant will receive a $10 Visa gift card. At the end of the post-training session, after each participant has completed their surveys, each participant will be entered in a drawing for a $50 Visa gift card.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Your surveys will be anonymous.

- Training will take place in a conference room separate from the general public area.
• The surveys will be stored in a double-locked file cabinet in the training center. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years (federal mandate), all surveys will be destroyed.
• I cannot assure participants that other members of the group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group. Confidentiality will be encouraged throughout the training process.

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 Hamilton-Guy Counseling and training center. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Janice Ringstaff. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at Jringstaff@Liberty.edu You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, Dr. Courtney Evans-Thompson, at cevan75@liberty.edu

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., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.
Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

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

Please check the box if the statement below is true.

______________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant/ Date

______________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Investigator/ Date
APPENDIX C

Self-Efficacy Scale (SES)

The 30-item scale measures general levels of belief of self-competence.

The image as been removed due to copywriting restrictions.
APPENDIX D

KANSAS PARENT SATISFACTION SCALE (KPS)

This 3-item instrument measures satisfaction with oneself as a parent, the behavior of one’s child, and one’s relationship with one’s child.

The image has been removed due to copywriting restrictions.
APPENDIX E

Open-ended Questionnaire

Thinking about your child, please complete the following statements. Your answers will have no influence on your ability to participate in the program. Please DO NOT sign your name on this page.

1. Talking to my child is

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Being a parent is

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. What would you tell your adult child about being a parent?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
### Table 1

**KPS Response Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/parent-child relationship</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Codes**

1 = Extremely dissatisfied  
2 = Very dissatisfied  
3 = Somewhat dissatisfied  
4 = Mixed  
5 = Somewhat satisfied  
6 = Very satisfied  
7 = Extremely satisfied
## APPENDIX G

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme: Belief in one’s own abilities</th>
<th>Nominal/Ordinal Code</th>
<th>Classifiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A=1</td>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B=2</td>
<td>Disagree moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C=3</td>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D=4</td>
<td>Agree moderately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E=5</td>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX H

### Table 3

Open-ended questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Point of focus</th>
<th>Common descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Talking to child</td>
<td>Hard, frustrating, tough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>Personal view of being a parent</td>
<td>Prepare, persistence, patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td>Needs of your child as a future parent</td>
<td>Love, rewarding, joyful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Descriptive Statistics Open-ended Questions
Table 6

*Descriptive statistics Open-ended questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Pre-Training</th>
<th>Post-Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Pre</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.586</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Post</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.422</td>
<td>.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2 Pre</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.992</td>
<td>.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2 Post</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td>.230</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Reflection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3 Pre</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3 Post</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.965</td>
<td>.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J

RECRUITMENT LETTER

November __, 2019

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree in Community Care and Counseling. The purpose of my research is to determine if training focused on parenting skills can lead to change in how parent’s communication and what they believe about parenting. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a parent or guardian of a second or third grader, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete 2 surveys, 1 questionnaire, and attend three training sessions. Session #1 will be approximately 90 minutes because it includes your completing 2 short surveys and 1 brief questionnaire. Sessions 2 and 3 will be 60 minutes in length. Four weeks after Session 3, you will be asked to repeat the two surveys and 1 questionnaire that were completed at Session 1. It should take approximately 30 minutes for completing the surveys and the questionnaire. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate complete and return the consent document to the researcher before Session 1 begins or by email @JRingstaff@Liberty.edu.

A consent document will be given to you 7-10 days before training starts. The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and return it.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a $10 Visa gift card at the end of Session 1 and be eligible for a drawing for a $50 Visa gift card when completing the post training surveys.

Sincerely,

Janice Ringstaff, MA, LPC
JRingstaff@Liberty.edu
469-438-1238
APPENDIX K

PERMISSION TO USE SES

Re: Request to use The Self-Efficacy Scale (SES)

Sherer, Mark <msherer@bcm.edu>
Mon 11/11/2019 10:51 AM

I am writing to give you permission to use the Self-efficacy Scale for your project. I have attached the scale and scoring instructions.

Mark Sherer, Ph.D., ABPP, FACRM
Senior Scientist and Associate Vice President for Research
TIRR Memorial Hermann
APPENDIX L

PERMISSION TO USE KPS

Re: Request permission to use Kansas Parent Satisfaction Scale (KPSS)

Walter Schumm <schumm@ksu.edu>
Thu 11/14/2019 11:39 PM

Dear Janice,

You are welcome to use the Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale for your academic research at no cost; please let me know how your research with the scale turns out.

Thanks,

Walter R. Schumm, Ph.D.
Professor of Applied Family Science
College of Health and Human Sciences
APPENDIX M

SITE PERMISSION LETTER

November 7, 2019

Mrs. Cheryl Hamilton & Mrs. Mechell Guy
Executive Directors
Hamilton-Guy Counseling & Training Group
777 E Wheatland Rd
Suite 101
Duncanville, TX 75116

Dear Janice Ringstaff

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Parental Communication Patterns and The Impact on Young Children, we have decided to grant you permission to contact parents and invite them to participate in your study.

The researcher will have no identifying information regarding the services provided to the family at Hamilton-Guy Counseling and Training Center.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Hamilton, Executive Director
Mechell Guy, Executive Director
Hamilton-Guy Counseling & Training Group

www.hamiltonguycounselingandtraining.org  402 W. Wheatland Rd. Suite 170-C Duncanville, Texas 75116
Office: 972.883.6799 and Facsimile: 1.877.837.3492