

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES WITH NON-NUCLEAR  
FAMILIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Brian Andrew Randall

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2021

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES WITH NON-NUCLEAR  
FAMILIES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by Brian Andrew Randall

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2021

APPROVED BY:

Vonda Beavers, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Kristy Motte, Ed.D., Committee Member

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators' efforts to address the barriers to parental investment for non-nuclear families. The theory guiding this study was the path-goal theory, which builds on motivational theory to select the proper leadership style to achieve the desired outcome. The central research question was intended to discover the essence of Central Pennsylvania school administrators' shared lived experiences addressing parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. Three subquestions served to investigate the school administrators' experiences with parental investment barriers, motivations, and their ability to lead. High schools in Central Pennsylvania was the setting for the study. The sites of this study included 12 school districts, which varied in size. Participants included different Central Pennsylvania school district administrators, purposefully sampled by selecting those who were knowledgeable about the phenomenon to share their experiences. Through individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing prompt, school administrators were encouraged to share their experiences regarding non-nuclear family barriers. Data analysis included epoché, horizontalization, clusters of meaning, and structural and textural descriptions. Participants expressed frustration when addressing issues resulting from non-nuclear families. Five major themes were identified from the participants experiences. Through participants experiences, it was established that school administrators put forth extra effort to assist non-nuclear families, use certain leadership practices to help non-nuclear families, found themselves faced with an expectation of barrier removal from non-nuclear families, felt helpless at times in assisting families, and identified system failures within the educational and judicial system.

*Keywords:* family structure, leadership practices, non-nuclear, parental investment

## **Copyright Page**

©2021 by Brian Andrew Randall

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this paper to my wife, Brittany, and my children, Taedyn, Jaxon, and Kolesen. They have been the most prominent victims of the sacrifice of the time my research has required. This document reflects my love for you, and I am looking forward to spending more time with you moving forward!

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank Dr. Randy Tierce on guiding me through the first half of this journey. Your constant availability and reminders of enjoying the journey was a guiding light on this uncharted path. I appreciate your time and efforts and hope you enjoy retirement!

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Vonda Beavers. You started this journey with me as my committee member and really helped keep everything together when I need a chair mid-way through this journey. I appreciate your constant support and reassurance. Thank you!

Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Kristy Motte for joining my committee as my methodologist. Your suggestions and comments furthered my academic writing and I appreciate your contributions.

I would like to express my deepest thanks to my participants. You gave your time to share your stories with me during a global wide pandemic and were so open throughout the process. I truly could not of completed this without you!

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who supported me through this journey. I was blessed with a tremendous support system which included a mixture of those I knew before this journey and those I met during this journey. I believe in education it truly takes a village to raise a child and it took a village to help me become the person I am today. Thank you to everyone who helped guide me to this point!

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	3
Copyright Page .....	4
Dedication.....	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
List of Tables .....	13
List of Figures.....	14
List of Abbreviations.....	15
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	16
Overview.....	16
Background .....	16
Historical Context .....	17
Social Context.....	18
Theoretical Context.....	20
Situation to Self .....	23
Problem Statement.....	26
Purpose Statement .....	26
Significance of the Study .....	27
Empirical Significance .....	27
Practical Significance.....	29
Theoretical Significance.....	30
Research Questions .....	32
Central Research Question (CRQ).....	32

Research Subquestions (SQs) .....	33
Definitions .....	35
Summary .....	36
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	37
Overview .....	37
Theoretical Framework .....	37
Expectancy Theory .....	37
Path-Goal Theory .....	39
Synthesis .....	40
Related Literature .....	41
The Evolution of the American Family .....	41
Non-Nuclear Families .....	43
Societies Ethics and Moral Values .....	46
Family Structure Research .....	49
Research on Educational Outcomes .....	52
Parental Investment .....	56
Leadership Styles and Practices .....	61
COVID-19 Pandemic Implications .....	63
Gaps in the Research .....	65
Biblical Worldview .....	66
Summary .....	67
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .....	69
Overview .....	69



Design .....	69
Research Questions .....	72
CRQ .....	72
SQs .....	72
Setting .....	72
Large Schools .....	73
Medium Schools .....	74
Small Schools .....	75
Participants .....	75
Procedures .....	77
The Researcher's Role .....	79
Data Collection .....	80
Individual Interviews .....	82
Focus Group Interview .....	89
Writing Prompt .....	91
Data Analysis .....	93
Trustworthiness .....	95
Credibility .....	95
Dependability and Confirmability .....	96
Transferability .....	97
Ethical Considerations .....	97
Summary .....	98
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS .....	99

Overview.....	99
Participants.....	99
Donna Dunkeld.....	101
Tom Jennings.....	101
Jasmine Russell.....	101
Walter Boyd.....	102
Jake Yates.....	102
Don Hoffman.....	103
Judy Caldwell.....	103
John Black.....	103
Floyd Carter.....	104
Dave Davis.....	104
Shawn Ross.....	105
Marty Daniel.....	105
Results.....	105
Theme Development.....	105
Major Theme 1: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Result in Extra Work for the Administrator.....	107
Major Theme 2: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Require Certain Leadership Practices.....	126
Major Theme 3: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Are Expected to be Removed by the School.....	134

Major Theme 4: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Leave Administrators Feeling Helpless.....	140
Major Theme 5: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Expose System Failures.....	151
Research Question Responses.....	161
The CRQ.....	161
Research SQs .....	161
Summary .....	173
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	175
Overview.....	175
Summary of Findings .....	175
Central Research Question .....	176
Research Subquestion 1 .....	176
Research Subquestion 2 .....	176
Research Subquestion 3 .....	177
Discussion .....	178
Empirical Discussion .....	178
Theoretical Discussion .....	180
Implications.....	182
Theoretical Implications.....	183
Empirical Implications .....	183
Practical Implications.....	185
Delimitations and Limitations.....	191

Recommendations for Future Research .....	192
Summary .....	193
REFERENCES .....	195
APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER.....	222
APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT SITE APPROVAL .....	223
APPENDIX C: SCREENING SURVEY FOR PARTICIPANT SELECTION.....	224
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	225
APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT LETTER (EMAIL).....	228
APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT FOLLOW-UP LETTER (EMAIL).....	229
APPENDIX G: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	230
APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS .....	232
APPENDIX I: WRITING PROMPT EMAIL .....	233
APPENDIX J: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION .....	234
APPENDIX K: SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS CODED AS PARENTAL INVESTMENT ..	280
APPENDIX L: AUDIT TRAIL.....	307

### **List of Tables**

Table 1. Participant Demographics ..... 100

Table 2. List of Top 25 Used Codes and Their Associated Themes..... 106

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1. Major Themes Mapped to Research Questions .....	162
-----------------------------------------------------------	-----

### **List of Abbreviations**

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER)

Grade point average (GPA)

Individualized education plans (IEP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Student Assistance Program (SAP)

School resource officer (SRO)

Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Chapter One provides the framework for this study, consisting of school administrators' lived experiences regarding parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. In this chapter, I review the study's background from a historical, social, and theoretical perspective. As the primary researcher, I identify the critical motivations for conducting this research study, including my academic qualification, life experiences, personal beliefs, and personal interests. Furthermore, I identify the research problem, the study's purpose, the study's significance, and the research questions to guide the study. Presented in this chapter is a list of frequently used terms and corresponding definitions. This chapter also addresses why I selected this topic to study and how the data could support policy implications for school administrators when addressing parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. The chapter concludes with a detailed summary of the chapter.

### **Background**

Families and households have evolved throughout American history (Parker & Horowitz, 2015). Families used to consist of extended family and immediate family, all living in the same household (Brooks, 2020). In the cases where extended family and immediate family did not live in the same household, they lived within the same town (Brooks, 2020). Since the 1960s, family structure has changed, with extended family becoming more distant and the immediate family becoming less dependent on the immediate family's support and services (Brooks, 2020). The following sections will provide the historical, social, and theoretical background on family structure and parental investment barriers.



## Historical Context

Family structure trends have changed in the past decade for American families (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Nuclear families, defined as those that consist of a mother and father who are married, are no longer commonplace in American society (Furstenberg, 2015; Miller, 2020). In addition to the changes in family structure, children of the present decade have been raised differently from their parents (Parker & Horowitz, 2015; Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Children born from 1995 to 2010 are referred to as Generation Z (Cetin & Halisdemir, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z came to age during the financial crisis of 2008 and is more likely to have non-nuclear households than any generation before it (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). How non-nuclear families help their children with academics, despite the stressors of financial and family concerns, is not widely known (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Turner, 2015). Cavanagh and Fomby (2019), who built upon prior research by Sun and Li (2011), found that the non-nuclear family structure type negatively affects student outcomes. Santin and Sicilia (2016) found similar results indicating that non-nuclear family households negatively impact grade retention and mathematics scores significantly. The negative academic impact on students due to family structure is concerning (Israel et al., 2001; Mitchell et al., 2015). Therefore, research is needed to discover how school districts react to this phenomenon and the type of leadership style perceived as appropriate.

Academics are affected by attendance (Lim et al., 2019). It is not clear why family structure affects school attendance, but research has shown that it does have an impact in industrialized countries (Vos, 2001). This non-nuclear family structure trend negatively affecting school attendance and academics can be traced back to the early 20th century (Moehling, 2004). Connected to this phenomenon are many factors, such as socioeconomic status, parental

employment, and school climate (K. Gordon & Fefer, 2019; Pong & Ju, 2000; Turner, 2015). School-family-community partnerships have been found to be useful in increasing student attendance (J. A. Williams et al., 2020; Sheldon, 2007). Although there is significant research to show a correlation between family structure and attendance, few studies analyze the school administrator's perspective on attendance based on family structure (Green et al., 2019; Moehling, 2004; Sheldon, 2007). Some research suggests that single-parent households are at no disadvantage, and only complex households, such as households headed by a relative or non-parent place students at an attendance disadvantage (Thomas et al., 2019; Vos, 2001). More research is needed on establishing the intersection between school and family for attendance as one of the challenges faced by non-nuclear parents (Pilgrim et al., 2015).

### **Social Context**

Disruptions in families are a growing trend in American society (Dominguez-Martinez et al., 2020). In 2006, only 67.4% of children younger than 18 lived in a two-parent family as compared to 1970, when 85% of children lived in a nuclear household (Cavanagh, 2012). How schools address the changing family structure and the challenges students present differs from school district to school district. Hussey et al. (2016) found that parental separation resulted in a lower GPA, increased likelihood of participating in risky behaviors, and poorer mental health for children. These are all challenges that school administrators face in creating a positive school climate (K. Gordon & Fefer, 2019).

The recent U.S. recession has resulted in higher unemployment rates, underemployment, and child poverty (Simons et al., 2016). Family transitions disproportionately affect low-income and underrepresented families who are already at a disadvantage from social and economic marginalization (Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018). The family structure is tightly linked to economic

resources; therefore, it is not surprising that non-nuclear families are growing under the United States' current social environment (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019). According to Cavanagh and Fomby (2019), a child's biological parents' presence increases the family's ability to provide time, money, and emotional support for the child. Schools have historically addressed gaps within society geared toward providing an equal playing field for all students. However, without research or programs to help disadvantaged students due to family structure, family transitions further contribute to socioeconomic and gender-based inequalities (Raley & Sweeney, 2020).

Parents who participate in their child's education are more likely to have children with better academics, fewer behavioral issues, and higher social functioning (Garbacz et al., 2017). All these functions benefit society by producing a well-informed, productive citizen, which is the purpose of formal education (Gutek, 2011). However, behavioral issues in schools result in familial financial consequences, family stress, and future consequences for the child (Mowen, 2017). Children of divorced or separated parents referred to as non-nuclear families, are more likely to have lower academics, lower psychosocial well-being, a poorer self-concept, and a higher risk of dropping out (Laursen et al., 2019). Without school intervention toward this presupposed population, children of non-nuclear families have a higher risk of becoming a burden on society through criminalized action or underemployment (Mowen, 2017; Raley & Sweeney, 2020).

In addition, the recent Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has created another societal factor in school administrators' leadership practices. School leaders are tasked with addressing safety and legal concerns with returning to school during the pandemic with no additional time or resources. The pandemic has had devastating effects on the economy (Fernandes, 2020). School closures have adverse effects such as loss of education, nutritional

problems, loss of parental productivity, and income (Viner et al., 2020). When the family structure is considered, financial security, parenting quality, and parenting stress are all exacerbated for non-nuclear families (Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018). With the growing number of unstable families in the United States (Raley & Sweeney, 2020), research on leadership practices to address equity gaps is needed; the need for this research has been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Theoretical Context**

Vroom's (1964) motivational theory suggests that individuals differ significantly in their motives, values, and abilities, leading to their motivation to achieve the optimal results. Parental investment theories focus on a parent's values and abilities. Two leading theories are prevalent in the literature: the family stress model and the family investment model. The family stress model was first proposed by K. J. Conger and Conger (1994) to explain how financial constraints may harm the parents' emotional and marital states. These disruptions in an emotional state and marital status can disrupt effective parental practices resulting in negative academic, behavioral, and psychological outcomes (K. J. Conger & Conger, 1994). The deleterious impact of financial hardship on the parental unit and the children results from the stress correlated with managing inadequate financial resources, working toward making ends meet, and cutting back on necessary expenses (Simons et al., 2016). The family stress model has been used in various studies and is prevalent in various studies focused on ethnic groups (K. J. Conger & Conger, 1994; R. D. Conger et al., 2002; Landers-Potts et al., 2015; Simons et al., 2016). The family stress model and its theory of financial hardship were essential for this study because non-nuclear families may encounter limited resources due to their family structure (Lim et al., 2019). As a result, the

family stress model may explain why parental investment barriers exist. School administrators will need to consider family stress when considering their selection of leadership styles.

The family investment model offers an alternative explanation for the impact of socioeconomic status. The family investment model is based on economic investment theory (Mayer, 1997). The model suggests that parents with more significant economic resources have a greater ability to make investments in their children's development than do parents who have limited resources that must be focused on the immediate needs of survival (Mayer, 1997). Parental investments in the family investment model are defined as the presence of learning materials in the home, residing in a good neighborhood, ability to provide adequate provisions for a standard of living, and behavioral investments (R. D. Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Martin et al., 2010; Mayer, 1997; Simons et al., 2016). Simons et al. (2016) clarified that behavioral investments may include spending time with the child on academics such as homework, encouraging the child's participation in extracurriculars like sports, and cordial relationships with the child's teachers, including open lines of communication. These aspects of parental investment all include engagement with the school. The family investment model is based on financial constraints that school administrators cannot help the family to address, such as a lack of household income. However, this theory was important for this study because school administrators must consider these parental investment barriers when considering the most appropriate leadership style.

The focus of this study was on the leadership practices used in addressing parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. The non-nuclear family structure has its own field of research and the effects of family structure. Family systems theory suggests that family composition impacts family interaction because the family members are interdependent

(Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Family interaction influences parents' ability to support their child's healthy development, which would have implications on the type of leadership style school administrators use in addressing the parental barrier of family composition (Lee et al., 2020). Similar implications were found using the family systems theory concerning family composition and family interaction (Repetti et al., 2002; Roustit et al., 2011).

The theories on family structure, family composition, family stress, and family investment include educational outcomes, but are limited in their scope. Ecological systems theory separates the aspects of research into macrosystems and microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified the partnership between families and schools as macrosystems manifesting every day in interactions, learning, and development. Crosnoe (2015) used ecological systems theory to connect and establish congruence between the systems that foster positive outcomes for families and children through interventions within the home and school. More recently, Garbacz et al. (2017) utilized ecological systems theory to identify that prevention programs targeting teacher perceptions of parental investment showed improvements in buffering parents' barriers and using technology to reduce these interventions. The coordination across home and school systems is an aspect of ecological systems theory that was implemented in this study. School administrators serve as the bridge between the school system (teachers, policies, programs) and the home system (household engagements, parental investment, etc.).

This study was focused on the barriers faced by non-nuclear parents. Studies on family structure have included the family instability hypothesis (Wu & Martinson, 1993). The instability hypothesis is a stress mediation model that evaluates the causal relationship between transitions among the family and child outcomes through the conduit of stress (Hadfield, Ungar, & Nixon,

2018). The family instability hypothesis suggests that family transitions negatively affect outcomes due to their instability, and therefore, children who experience these transitions have more negative outcomes (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). Hadfield, Ungar, and Nixon (2018) defined family transitions as parents dissolving or entering into a romantic relationship through marriage, divorce, cohabitation, or dating. Except for entering into marriage, all of these resulting family structures are considered non-nuclear. In addition to the negative impact of family transitions because of family instability, research has shown that it is more common for disadvantaged families to experience instability (Brown et al., 2020 Hadfield, Ungar, & Nixon, 2018; Lehrer & Son, 2017). Thus, school administrators are faced with leadership style decisions based on parental circumstances, such as family transitions that may affect student outcomes. The instability hypothesis suggests multiple pathways for interventions to improve parent and family stress, with which this research focused on leadership style interventions (Hadfield, Ungar, & Nixon, 2018).

### **Situation to Self**

Living in Central Pennsylvania for my entire life and coming from a nuclear family, I always believed that everyone was just like me. However, as I began my education career, I realized that each student encountered unique individual challenges. Schools are viewed as scapegoats for society's problems and asked to resolve these issues (Briscoe & De Oliver, 2012). In the case of learning disabilities, schools implement individualized education plans to ensure that students can succeed (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). If a student struggles with mental health issues, the schools have a student assistance team that can help them receive services to address such issues (Veaser & Blakemore, 2006). To a varying degree, schools attempt to support students in any way they can, but no standard practice is implemented

throughout the educational field in the case of family structure (Egalite, 2016; Garbacz et al., 2017; K. Gordon & Fefer, 2019; Green et al., 2019). As a result, I acquired the desire to identify leadership practices that are perceived as effective and help struggling families to have the opportunities and resources necessary to become successful.

As a European American male coming from a nuclear family, my experiences are different from the students and families I seek to understand. However, I am certified to be a principal within Pennsylvania and relate to my participants on that common ground. Coming from a small school district with limited funds, I understand the financial constraints that schools have placed upon them. Programs to engage families can become costly and must be weighed within the entire school budget. The observation of school administrators' perceptions of leadership style's influence on non-nuclear parental investment barriers, academically and socially, will further the research and my understanding of what is needed to ensure students can be successful.

I conducted this study with an axiological philosophical assumption. An axiological assumption is when the researcher acknowledges that their research is value-laden and biases are presented (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My experiences as a nuclear family member, raising my children in a nuclear family, and my interactions with students in the education profession will influence my data interpretation. The paradigm that guided the study is constructivism. Constructivism, epistemologically speaking, is the psychological and philosophical point of view, asserting that individuals form or construct their understanding of a situation or concept (O'Donnell, 2012). Individuals construct knowledge based on their beliefs and experiences in specific situations (Schunk, 2016). This constructed knowledge is unique from individual to individual. Understanding commonalities in knowledge shared by school administrators will



further research on how to serve non-nuclear family students best. Constructivism includes the assumption that individuals are active learners and are continually developing their understanding of the world around them (Schunk, 2016). This study highlighted school administrators' interactions and situations involving leadership styles to address parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families.

Furthermore, ontologically speaking, my worldview is that we are spiritual beings and individuals do what is best for their families based off of their own moral code and ethics. These morals and ethics, for my family, are instilled through biblical teachings and religious gatherings. However, I understand that not all participants and families have this same worldview. Therefore, I understand that my personal beliefs and experiences may present a bias that could have impacted the way I conduct the research. I was sure to eliminate bias from my results through epoché.

An expectancy model approach with the path-goal theory served to narrow the focus of the study. Path-goal theory is rooted in a motivational theory called expectancy theory and guided the study by applying leadership approaches in the most appropriate situations (House & Mitchell, 1975). The most appropriate leadership styles, depending on the parent's motivation in achieving the task, are defined as either supportive, directive, achievement-oriented, or participative (Olowoselu et al., 2019). Supportive leadership is focused on ensuring subordinate satisfaction whereas directive leadership provides structure for subordinates to follow to achieve a goal (Malik, 2012). Achievement-oriented leadership is when the leader sets clear and achievable goals for the subordinate to achieve; whereas participative leadership is when the leader encourages subordinates to participate in the decision-making process (Olowoselu et al., 2019). The four leadership approaches are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem in this transcendental phenomenological study was the parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families as expressed through the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators. Family structure in America has been drastically changing; however, the educational approach has not changed (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019; Dominguez-Martinez et al., 2020). The barriers to parental investment for non-nuclear families and the lack of research on how school administrators may address these barriers negatively impact non-nuclear students (Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018; Lim et al., 2019; Sun & Li, 2011). A possible cause of this problem is a lack of school administrators' understanding of the barriers to parental investment of non-nuclear families and administrators' leadership approaches (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Hamlin & Flessa, 2018; Kalkan et al., 2020; Lazaridou & Gravani Kassida, 2015; Yamamoto et al., 2014). A study investigating school administrators' lived experiences regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families utilizing a qualitative transcendental phenomenological study could remedy the lack of research in this area.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this proposed transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. Non-nuclear families were generally defined as families that do not consist of the biological mother and father being married and living within the same household (Miller, 2020). The theory guiding this study was House and Mitchell's (1975) path-goal theory, which suggests that the leader selects a leadership style that is most appropriate in a given situation based on the motivation of the subordinate. A subordinate for this study was the non-nuclear parent.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributes to the existing research regarding educational challenges for non-nuclear family parents from the school administrator's perspective. Schools are asked to address many challenges that society presents. This study elucidates how school administrators view the phenomenon of non-nuclear parental investment barriers. This study was different from existing research by providing the school administrator's perspective on the challenges the student or family faces. Research has shown that the non-nuclear family's adverse effects are primarily due to a shortage of family resources (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019; Sun & Li, 2011). This study's findings may help improve the academic conditions for non-nuclear students by revealing how school administrators view the problem from a school-home relationship perspective and how school administrators address the challenges through leadership. Schools can improve students' learning environment by providing resources that may not be available to non-nuclear students.

### **Empirical Significance**

Researchers note that a child's first education occurs in the home (Lee et al., 2020). However, families in America have changed over the past 5 decades. In the 19th century, when America was predominantly an agricultural society, marriage put the family at the center of production and reproduction (Furstenberg, 2015). The general expectation to marry and have children changed during the 1940s, which was the start of World War II (Parker & Horowitz, 2015). There was a rush to marry due to the war, and the marriage age dropped drastically (Brooks, 2020). Due to this stress caused by early marriage, divorce rates steadily increased (Furstenberg, 2015). Students started to be raised in non-nuclear families during this time (Parker & Horowitz, 2015). Women who had been able to stay at home for childrearing, had to change their family role due to economic restraints (Winkler, 2012). An increase in women entering the

workforce resulted from World War II and the increasing divorce rate (Parker & Horowitz, 2015). The status of marriage continued to be altered after the Great Recession of 2008 (Parker & Horowitz, 2015). Couples started to prefer to cohabitate, marry, and then bear children (Furstenberg, 2015).

At the start of the internet age, another generation of learners was born (Schneider, 2017). Generation Z consists of people born from 1995 until 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). As Seemiller and Grace (2017) pointed out, Generation Z became college age in 2013 and all classrooms in colleges, high schools, and elementary schools are full of this generation. These students are very diverse; they come from biracial, multiracial, or same-sex parents (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). Generation Z grew up during the financial crisis of 2008, which put financial strains on the family and created stressors for parents (Turner, 2015). As a result of this stress on the family, family structure has diminished, resulting in more non-nuclear families (Carlson, 2017).

Family structure is one of the most significant predictors of academic achievement (Baidoo-Anu et al., 2019; Jeynes, 2005). Research has shown that parental investment directly affects a child's social competence and school achievement (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2019). Although much research has been done on non-nuclear families' challenges from the perspective of the child and the parent (An & Sorensen, 2017; Laursen et al., 2019; Sun & Li, 2011), little is known about how school administrators experience the parental investment challenges. This study addressed a gap in the literature on school administrators' leadership practices to address parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. By further developing the literature in this area, this study will help educators and researchers understand the challenges perceived by

school administrators as well as provide researchers with an understanding of school administrators' leadership practices regarding non-nuclear family structure barriers.

### **Practical Significance**

Disruptions in families is a growing trend in American society (Furstenberg, 2015). Academically, students from non-nuclear families are disadvantaged (Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018; Lim et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015; Sun & Li, 2011). Hussey et al. (2016) found that parental separation resulted in a lower grade point average (GPA), increased likelihood of participating in risky behaviors, and poor mental health. These are all challenges that school administrators face in creating a positive school climate (K. Gordon & Fefer, 2019). Schools are currently responding to this dynamic, whether directly or indirectly (McLoyd et al., 2016). Hussey et al. suggested that schools put forth policies and programs that incentivize families to remain intact and stable. However, understanding the school administrators' perspectives on non-nuclear family's educational challenges will allow policymakers and educators to make informed decisions on how to solve the challenges non-nuclear parents and schools are facing. Additionally, school administrators' perceptions of students' backgrounds and implications on educational outcomes can be addressed in developing future school administrators (Thompson et al., 2017). School leader training programs can incorporate appropriate content on leadership practices that address the challenges parents face.

Research has shown that school connectedness is closely linked to academic success, with students engaged at school having better attendance and academics than students who are not engaged (Green et al., 2019). School environments that promote high academic standards in disciplinary structure, student support, and academic expectations have shown positive effects on students living without both parents (Huang et al., 2017). Engaging students within the school

and promoting a positive learning environment begins with student attendance (Green et al., 2019). Schools that traveled implementing school, family, and community partnerships saw increased student attendance (Sheldon, 2007). Kalkan et al. (2020) found that school administrators work within their educational institutions to fulfill their administrative duties, such as increasing student attendance, while simultaneously adapting to the changing expectations. It is essential to understand the school administrators' experiences because their perspectives and decisions influence all major decisions within the school as they adapt to a changing society (Spruance et al., 2020; J. A. Williams et al., 2020).

This research will add to the current understanding of school administrators' experiences with family structure and educational outcomes as well as provide insight into school administrators' experiences with parental investment barriers on a child's education. With the steady decrease in students coming from nuclear families, schools' impact will be a realm of education that policymakers, educators, and school administrators will have to address moving forward (Laursen et al., 2019; Smock & Schwartz, 2020). By further understanding the current school administrator experience with non-nuclear families, school leader training programs can better prepare future leaders to address this growing issue (Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Shabazian, 2020; Thompson et al., 2017).

### **Theoretical Significance**

Parental beliefs about parental investment, current life contexts, and parental perceptions all play a role in parental investment (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). These aspects of parental investment can be explained by parental motivation. The assumptions of expectancy theory reveal that the motivation to perform a task is based on a person's expectations or beliefs (Razik & Swanson, 2010). In this study, the task is to foster parental investment, and the beliefs can

vary from household to household. One aspect of expectancy theory is that parents are free to choose their behavior based on the expectations they have from the organization which, in this study, was the school (Lunenburg, 2011). These expectations would be portrayed by the school administrators, who determine the direction of the institution. This study furthered the expectancy theory through the application of its principles to education and expanding the breadth of expectancy theory to parental investment.

This study was an amalgamation of expectancy theory and path-goal theory. Path-goal theory is a leadership theory with four different leadership styles based on the particular situation (Razik & Swanson, 2010). Leaders can choose the appropriate leadership styles based on the situation's expectations (Northouse, 2019). Olowoselu et al. (2019) applied path-goal leadership in the educational field with educational management and their subordinates. Yu and Vinitwatanakhun (2016) utilized path-goal theory in the educational field at the collegiate level. However, little to no research has applied path-goal theory to the secondary education level between school administrators and parents through parental investment. Therefore, this study also has theoretical significance for researchers of leadership practices. House and Mitchell (1975) developed the path-goal theory to explain leadership style selection based on subordinate motivation. By incorporating this theory for a qualitative study on school administrators' leadership practices in addressing non-nuclear parental investment barriers, path-goal theory can be expanded. The theory will provide a framework for interpreting school administrators' leadership styles and how they experience leadership styles based on parental investment motivations. As a result, this study will further the theory for researchers to implement leadership style selection within an educational institution based on parental motivations.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions guide the study in analyzing the central phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). School administrators defined what parental investment looks like in their experiences to establish a common understanding of parental investment. The research questions allowed me to explore how school administrators experience barriers to parental investment and parental-motivation role in investment. Finally, through the research questions, I asked school administrators to share their perceptions of how their leadership impacts parental investment barriers. An expectancy model theoretical framework scaffolds the questions with a focus on path-goal theory. Therefore, path-goal theory framed the study through the lens of leadership styles, whereas the expectancy model provided the framework of why certain leadership practices may be deemed most appropriate.

### **Central Research Question (CRQ)**

What is the essence of Central Pennsylvania school administrators' shared lived experiences regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families?

The central research question and subquestions for this study were derived from the existing literature on family structure, non-nuclear families resource limitations, and House and Mitchell's (1975) path-goal theory. This research question was aimed to capture the experience of school administrators' interaction with non-nuclear parents and capture the essence of the school administrators' construction of what leadership practices they use to address parental investment barriers. Research has shown that family structure impacts educational outcomes (Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018; Sun & Li, 2011). This question served to investigate the experiences of school administrators when dealing with a non-nuclear family's parental investment. In the ever-changing world of education, schools are tasked with addressing societal



issues. Marriage and traditional nuclear families are diminishing in today's society (Dominguez-Martinez et al., 2020; Furstenberg, 2015; Miller, 2020). Therefore, this is an aspect of education and leadership that school administrators actively address and experience. School administrators have first-hand experiences of students from different family dynamics and were able to articulate their motivations and the barriers to parental investment. House and Mitchell's (1975) theory on leadership based on motivation theory guided this study's inquiry into parental investment barriers and school administrator leadership practices. The school administrators' insight provided further research into how schools reach students and parents of non-nuclear families by presenting an in-depth description of school administrators' experiences and perspectives.

### **Research Subquestions (SQs)**

#### ***Subquestion 1***

What are central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding the impact of parental investment on expectations for non-nuclear families in social settings?

According to Hornby and Blackwell (2018), most schools find parental investment to be a desired part of the child's education. However, parental investment is not clearly defined and differs slightly throughout the literature (An & Sorensen, 2017; Thompson et al., 2017).

Educational disadvantages can be explained by a lack of parental investment from financial, human capital, and social perspectives (Shelleby, 2018; Sun & Li, 2011). The purpose of SQ1 was to investigate how school administrators experience parental investment and how they perceive its impact on non-nuclear families. Research has shown that prevalent barriers to parental involvement include lack of time and conflicts with work schedules (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). These barriers become

substantially more restrictive when only a single parent exists in the household or the family structure is disrupted (An & Sorensen, 2017; Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019; Thompson et al., 2017). Situational factors affect a leader's behavior and influence their decision making (House & Mitchell, 1975). School administrators' perspectives on the barriers that exist will affect the leadership practices they implement.

### ***Subquestion 2***

What are central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding the impact of motivation on parental investment for non-nuclear families?

Razik and Swanson (2010) explained through expectancy models that motivation to perform a task comes from an individual's expectations or beliefs about the effort, performance, and outcome. Vroom (1964) provided four assumptions on why people put forth effort. For this study, that effort was defined as a parental investment. Those four assumptions are (a) the individual has expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences; (b) they can make a conscious choice about their behavior, (c) they may want different things from the organization, and (d) they will choose the path that optimizes their outcome (Lunenburg, 2011). SQ2 served to investigate if the parental motivations observed are components of parental investment (An & Sorensen, 2017; Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019).

### ***Subquestion 3***

What are central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions of their ability to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers?

House and Mitchell (1975) furthered motivational theory assumptions and developed the path-goal theory, which states that some leadership styles are more effective than others depending on the situation. Olowoselu et al. (2019) furthered this research by applying path-goal theory to

educational management and leadership, and identified four main leadership styles effectively used in education, finding that supportive, directive, achievement-oriented, and participative leadership can be best applied in achieving task completion. Yu and Vinitwatanakhun (2016) explained that educational leaders recognize that their leadership style is important in their leadership and that leadership practices differed minimally across schools. SQ3 served to investigate how school administrators perceive their ability to select the appropriate leadership style to assist non-nuclear families as well as to further the literature on effective leadership styles used in education.

### **Definitions**

1. *Expectancy Theory*: A cognitive process theory of motivation based on the idea that people believe there are relationships between the efforts they put in and the reward they receive (Lunenburg, 2011)
2. *Family Structure*: The construction of one's family with parental units in the household that the child resides in (Kolaj-Robin et al., 2015).
3. *Generation Z*: People born from 1995 until 2010 (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).
4. *Non-Nuclear Family*: A diverse family setting that does not include two biological parents within the same household (Bengtson, 2001; Miller, 2020).
5. *Nuclear Family*: A family model consisting of two biological parents within the same household (Bengtson, 2001; Miller, 2020).
6. *Parental Investment*: Economic and sociological factors such as monetary involvement, at-home or out-of-home activities, resources for learning, and school involvement (A. B. Williams, 2016; Wolf & McCoy, 2019).

7. *Path-Goal Theory*: A leadership theory that utilizes the expectancy model in which one of the four leadership styles are selected based on the most appropriate situation (Razik & Swanson, 2010)

### **Summary**

Chapter One was focused on the factors that influence a negative correlation between family structure and educational outcomes. Family structure and its impact on educational outcomes are well-researched quantitatively from the perspective of the family; however, little qualitative research is available on school administrators' viewpoints and how they experience parental investment challenges of non-nuclear families. Family structure may result in negative academic outcomes, but it may also affect parental investment with the school, student attendance, and student discipline. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to elucidate the shared experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators regarding the barriers to parental investment for non-nuclear families. This study is significant because its purpose was to inform policymakers and educators about the challenges schools face in providing additional support and equitable educational opportunities for this growing population that is specific and underserved.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

Chapter Two of this transcendental phenomenological study includes an introduction of the theories that formulate the framework for the study and a review of related literature. I conducted this study through the dual lenses of expectancy theory and path-goal theory. The literature review is centered on the development of the non-nuclear family and leadership practices that have been researched. The development, research, and societal values of non-nuclear families presented provide context on the specific population that was studied, followed by a review of the literature regarding educational outcomes and parental investment as well as an examination of leadership style research. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study's theoretical framework was based on the path-goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1975). Path-goal theory is a leadership theory that employs the expectancy model as constructed by Vroom (1964). Vroom's expectancy model suggests that four main assumptions exist with motivation. These assumptions, in conjunction with the leadership styles in path-goal theory, will propel this study.

#### **Expectancy Theory**

There are several different motivation models, but the expectancy model suggests that the motivation to perform a task or function is based upon a person's expectations or beliefs (Razik & Swanson, 2010). Expectancy theory provides a model for predicting individual behavior

(Vroom, 2005). Vroom (1964) treated all three characteristics in the model as equal and the order they are considered in is ambiguous (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). Furthermore, this process is subconscious, but the selection process may consist of conscious deliberation (Baumann & Bonner, 2017). Expectancy theory asserts that an individual makes a decision based on three characteristics: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy (Vroom, 1964).

Valence is the desirability of the outcome and the perceived value that the individual puts on the outcome (Vroom, 1964). The function of needs, goals, values, and preferences is another way to view valence (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Instrumentality is the level of reward the individual believes exists based on the level of effort (Vroom, 1964). The belief that if an individual does meet performance expectations, then that individual will receive a greater reward is the concept of instrumentality (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Finally, expectancy is the perceived probability that the effort put forward will result in a good performance (Vroom, 1964). The perception of this probability would be influenced by the individual's self-efficacy, the goal's difficulty, and the individual's perceived control (Chiang & Jang, 2008). According to Chiang and Jang (2008), another aspect of expectancy is past experiences, self-confidence, and the task's difficulty. Once the individual considers these three variables, they then execute whichever behavior has the most significant personal result (Baumann & Bonner, 2017).

The expectancy theory model has four assumptions (Vroom, 1964). The first assumption is that people invest social capital in an organization with expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences (Vroom, 1964). Vroom's (1964) second assumption is that a subordinate's behavior is a conscious choice. Therefore, people are free to choose their behavior based on their expectations from the organization (Lunenburg, 2011). The third assumption is that people differ in the things they want from the organization (Vroom, 1964). Finally, for the

fourth assumption, Vroom posited that people would choose the best course of action that optimizes the outcome for them personally. Therefore, expectancy theory is a theory that focuses on both motivation and behavioral choice (Baumann & Bonner, 2017).

Expectancy theory provides a general framework for assessing, interpreting, and evaluating school administrators' leadership, motivation, and attitude construction when interacting with non-nuclear families (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Expectancy theory is a process theory because it defines how motivation comes about (Chiang & Jang, 2008). A process theory is essential for this study because the study's goal is to understand the lived experiences of the school administrators. As a process theory, expectancy theory can help describe and explain how behavior is decided, sustained, or avoided (Vroom, 1964). One of the most respected theories of motivation is the process theory of expectancy (Chiang & Jang, 2008).

### **Path-Goal Theory**

The path-goal theory is a leadership theory that utilizes the expectancy model framework (Razik & Swanson, 2010). In addition, the path-goal theory has four different leadership styles based on the provided situation. The theory requires that leaders adopt directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented leadership behavior based on the situation (Olowoselu et al., 2019). The situational factors include institutional culture, task uncertainty, and subordinates' characteristics (House, 1971).

Directive leadership is when the leader precisely defines the subordinate's task and how it should be completed (Dixon & Hart, 2010). The leader provides clear rules and regulations for the task and explicitly lays out performance expectations (Northouse, 2019). Supportive leadership is one in which the leader attends to the comfort and personal needs of the subordinate (Northouse, 2019). This leadership style includes a high preference for the subordinates' needs

and helps improve trust between the leader and the subordinate (Olowoselu et al., 2019).

According to Olowoselu et al. (2019), participative leadership is when the leader appreciates subordinates' suggestions and opinions and this can be achieved by establishing positive communication between the leader and subordinates and including subordinates in the decision-making process. Finally, achievement-oriented leadership is when the leader provides a task for the subordinate, but shares responsibility, removes obstacles, and pushes for the subordinate's achievement (Olowoselu et al., 2019).

Olowoselu et al. (2019) explained that path-goal leadership might include a leader exhibiting more than one leadership style while interacting with a subordinate within the educational field. Previous researchers have pointed out that it is important to properly select an appropriate leadership style to motivate the organization's followers (Northouse, 2019). In whatever situation, the leader needs to be aware of the subordinate's needs and motivations to increase the subordinate's payoff (Razik & Swanson, 2010).

## **Synthesis**

The synthesis of these two frameworks would be that leadership styles are selected based on the subordinate's motivation. Subordinates in this study are parents raising students in a non-nuclear household. The first of four assumptions of their motivation for parental investment includes expectations about their needs, motivations, or past experiences. The second assumption is that their behavior is a conscious choice that the parents are free to choose as they deem most appropriate. Third, parents will want different things from the school. The last assumption is that parents will choose the alternative that is most beneficial to themselves. Based on their motivation, school administrators select a leadership style, either supportive, directive, achievement-oriented, or participative leadership, to best serve that parent and, therefore, the



student in that situation. This interaction between the parent's type of motivation for parental investment and the school administrator's corresponding leadership style helped describe the shared experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators' efforts to assist non-nuclear parents through parental investment barriers.

### **Related Literature**

The concept of family is always in a state of transition (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). I established a thorough understanding of the family's evolution to fully understand high school administrators' experiences in assisting non-nuclear parents through parental investment barriers. A deeper understanding of current research on family structure, educational outcomes, parental investment barriers, and leadership styles provide further context to the study. These topics are discussed in this literature review. This review provides a thorough understanding of the phenomena studied and allowed me to be fully aware of the past research so that I was able to move forward with my study with knowledge on past research.

### **The Evolution of the American Family**

Family is a fluid social construct that has evolved throughout American history (Zito, 2015). In the 17th century, families were patriarchal and included not only a wife and children, but often the husband's brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces (Laslett & Wall, 1972). These large families exhibited male superiority, and in addition to the extended family, they may have also included servants or hired hands (Laslett & Wall, 1972). However, this European style of the family was altered when the original colonialists sailed to America. Upon colonization, families experienced a stripping of the extended family and the conjugal unit's isolation (Laslett & Wall, 1972). The extended family's stripping was the first real American family structure as the extended family may have been unable to make the trip or did not survive the trip from

Europe. From this first American family structure, familial size and structure have become smaller and simplified in composition over the years (Laslett & Wall, 1972; Miller, 2020).

The 1875 Rhode Island State Census provided a glimpse into a young America's family structure with an inquiry to the family connections to the head of the family (Pryor, 1972). In 1875, 21% of rural families included one or more subfamilies, and 18% included three or more generations living within the household (Pryor, 1972). During the 19th century, the industrial revolution began and resulted in more economic mobility within the family (Stanfors & Goldscheider, 2017). Large families with multiple generations living within the same household began to change because of the industrial revolution. Fertility rates dropped significantly during this period due to extended families becoming more physically distant from the nuclear family (Hacker & Roberts, 2017). The distance between families was in contrast to the 1800s when the extended family was around the nuclear family and, in some cases, resided in the same household (Pryor, 1972).

At the turn of the century, the modern U.S. family began to develop. During the early 20th century, the family structure was defined by the relationship between the male breadwinner and the female caretaker (Farrell et al., 2012). This relationship was predicated on marriage's legal status consisting of a heterosexual male and a female (Farrell et al., 2012). Families still included extended kin, which served as a protection from poverty (South & Tolnay, 2019). The nuclear family then began to see a decline in the late 1950s (Coontz, 2016). The 1960s saw the decrease of the male breadwinner stereotype decrease as female caretakers began to enter the workforce (Kimmel, 2017). The main reason for this change was a result of World War II (Coontz, 2016). Adjustments during and after the war included more women in the workforce, later marriage, two-job marriages, fewer children, and more debt for the family (Berlin & Sum,

1988). In the 1960s and 1970s, the unmarried childbearing rate rose quickly due to the sexual revolution (Coontz, 2016). Although families were predominately nuclear until the 1960s, this family structure began to decline during the 1970s (Malley et al., 2020).

Families have changed from this point in history in response to the economic boom, depression, and transformation in gender roles (Teachman et al., 2013). Over the next half century, families began to take on differing structures. The occurrence of divorce has become more commonplace (Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Men are sharing more family responsibility in divorce than what they traditionally had been (Hadfield, Ungar, & Nixon, 2018). Cohabitation has become a commonplace family structure. Families have also strayed away from extended family and have become more individualized (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). These changes have made it harder for parents to raise children without assistance from society or family (Coontz, 2016). Research on family structure includes an analysis of family construction, society's ethics and moral values, and the evolution of the research on the family concept. Documented in the following sections are these three pillars of family structure.

### **Non-Nuclear Families**

The nuclear family, one in which the household consisted of a married heterosexual couple and included kin related by blood and marriage, was the most suited to the industrial capitalist (Comacchia, 2020). However, there has been a significant decline in the first marriage rate since 1960 (Teachman et al., 2013). Not only are people choosing not to get married, but those who do experience a higher rate of marriage dissolution over this same period (Teachman et al., 2013). As a result, the United States is experiencing a more significant disconnect between families and households (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). As discussed above, families were surrounded by extended family in the 1800s. Extended families are more stable, but less mobile

(Brooks, 2020). American nuclear families were most prosperous from 1950 to 1965 (Brooks, 2020). During this time, America had experienced great economic prosperity, as well. As a result, 70% of adults lived with a spouse, and marriage was a strong institution (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Since this high-water mark, stark declines in marriage have resulted.

Americans tend to relate marriage readiness to having a comfortable income, little to no debt, and a good secure job (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). These are all markers of economic prosperity (Schneider, 2017). Economic prosperity saw a decline during the 1970s and again during the Great Recession from 2007 to 2009 (Schneider, 2017). Marriage rates have declined steadily since the 1960s, resulting in other forms of civil unions (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). An important aspect of the dissolution of marriage as well as divorce is the creation of stepfamilies. Stepfamilies, cohabitation, premarital births, and same-sex marriages are all results of low marriage rates. They are elements of the American family that schools now must be cognizant of and address.

In 2018, only 51% of adults lived with a spouse (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). However, Americans do not consider not being married the same as being “single.” Individuals waiting to marry or having no desire to marry at all are not delaying living with an intimate partner (Lamidi & Manning, 2016). This concept of living with an intimate partner is referred to as cohabitation. Cohabitation, viewed as an alternative to marriage, is a growing trend within the United States (Cherlin, 2020). From 1980 to 1984, 40% of women lived with their partner before marriage as compared to 70% of women who lived with their partner before marriage between 2010 and 2014 (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Although most couples are choosing to cohabit before marriage, it is not always a precursor to marriage. Cohabiting couples either marry or dissolve their relationship within 2 to 3 years, with a lower chance of marriage in the dissolution

(Mernitz, 2018). Therefore, cohabiting is less of a stepping stone toward marriage and more likely to result in separation.

Cohabitation is popular because the individual has the freedom to move in and out of the relationship without legal hassle or interference (Almond, 2008). The idea has taken root that families can be put together; however, the individual desires which dilutes the marriage contract to the point of much less than a business deal (Almond, 2008). However, childbearing due to cohabitation has become an increasingly normative result (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). About 62% of nonmarital births from 2006 to 2013 resulted from cohabiting couples, compared to 38% from 1990 to 1995 (Lamidi, 2016). These births result in children who have a greater risk of being raised in a non-nuclear household throughout their childhood.

Births to unmarried women have a higher chance of resulting in non-nuclear upbringings, and in 2016 these births accounted for 40% of all births (Child Trends, 2019). Besides cohabitation, Smock and Schwartz (2020) linked the rise of nonmarital births to multiple-partner fertility, which is when an individual has biological children with more than one partner (Ginther et al., 2019). Multiple-partner fertility rates account for approximately 20% of births (Monte, 2019). As Monte (2019) explained, cohabiting families with children have multiple-partner fertility rates of 43.6%. Some researchers believe that this is a growing aspect of American society, and rates will continue to increase with marriage dissolution (Guzzo, 2014).

Another alternative to traditional marriage resulted from a landmark case in the Supreme Court in 2015 that legalized same-sex marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015). In 2016 there were 486,994 married same-sex couples, and this number increased to 547,000 in 2017 (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Same-sex couples are less likely to raise children than are heterosexual couples (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). However, the majority of children living within a same-sex

household are either biological or stepchildren from one of the partners (Gates, 2012). The rates of adoption and fostering of children are much higher among same-sex couples than among heterosexual couples (Gates, 2015). Same-sex childrearing is a newly developing family structure with limited research; however, it is another family structure that schools are interacting with that consists of a non-nuclear family.

Schools are a socialization unit for children, but they must partner with parents to foster a healthy relationship for the child to grow. Children's living arrangements reflect their parents' family transitions, and challenges may occur for the school to interact with these transitions (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). In 1970, 12% of all children lived with a single parent compared to 27% of children in 2018 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018a). In 2016, only 60% of children lived in a household that included both biological parents (Smock & Schwartz, 2020).

With the trends discussed in this section, it is unsurprising that many children experience a good deal of family instability throughout their lives (Umberson & Thomeer, 2020). Family instability refers to a parent figure leaving or entering the household. Added to this instability is the complexity of sibling composition, such as stepsiblings or half-siblings, that results from multiple-partner fertility (Guzzo, 2014). Household instability has a negative association with children's academic achievement (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Given the growing diversity of families and the dissolution of the institution of marriage, schools are faced with the growing challenge of forming partnerships with a child's home without knowing what household structure exists.

### **Societies Ethics and Moral Values**

American society has developed and evolved over the past several decades. This evolution has affected how society values and views marriage and the nuclear family. How

society values marriage and the nuclear family can be viewed from the perspective of laws. Until the last half century, American law has recognized marriage as the only form of partnership between two intimate partners (Cherlin, 2020). Children born outside of the marriage partnership were not the father's responsibility, and the father lacked legal stature to gain custody of the child (Cherlin, 2020). However, the family dynamics began to change in the 1970s when the Supreme Court began to extend fathers' rights (*Stanley v. Illinois*, 1972; *Weber v. Aetna Casualty & Surety Co.*, 1972). In the 1980s, the United States also eliminated laws that treated unmarried birth children differently than those born within a marriage (Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). These legal actions reflected society's disintegrating value of marriage as an institution for procreation. These cases also provided the groundwork for the recognition of same-sex marriages. In 2003, beginning in Massachusetts, same-sex marriage became a national conversation (*Goodrich v. Department of Public Health*, 2003). The landmark Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) extended rights and responsibility of marriage to same-sex couples 12 years later. This dissolution of traditional marriage through the legal system is a reflection of American value changes over the past half century.

Another aspect of the American value system is religion. The United States was founded on religious principles and the Protestant Ethic (Guttek, 2011). Religious doctrine provides a value system for believers that offers incentives for those who follow and punishments for those who do not (Cherlin, 2020). Brooks (2020) surmised that the 1950s and 1960s were prosperous from the family perspective because church attendance was high, resulting in a social structure of connectedness.

Religion provides a value system on childbearing and whether partners should use contraception, the morality of abortion, and the ethics of a divorce (Cherlin, 2020). Religious

realms have always viewed these childbearing and marriage elements as unfavorable; however, there has been an evolution in the United States (World Value Survey, 2017). The Second Vatican Council, which convened from 1962 to 1965, allowed the Catholic Church to liberalize its criteria for an annulment and thus lowered the standard for divorce (Cherlin, 2020). In addition to Catholics being tolerant of divorce, mainline Protestants are more tolerant toward divorced people than in previous decades (Wilcox, 2002). Conservative Protestants are still opposed to divorce, but are welcoming to divorced individuals if they seek to be healed (Edgell, 2006). This change in religious views toward marriage is a loosening of the values that define marital obligations. The loosening of these values reflects American society's evolution over the past several decades.

Another aspect of societal change that has affected the institution of marriage, and thus family structure, is the labor market. The labor market was once mainly a way for men to provide a household income (Brooks, 2020). Starting in the 1970s, the economic strain developed, and men's wages began to decline (Brooks, 2020). In addition, in the 1980s, the availability of industrial jobs began to decline, resulting in limited employment for working-class husbands (Cherlin, 2014). These changes eliminated the ability and societal norm of men providing a household income and instead began the evolution of women joining the workforce and supplementing the household income (Cherlin, 2020). With the dissolution of a breadwinner concept, additional strains were placed on the institution of marriage, resulting in further dissolution (Brooks, 2020).

Finally, societal norms regarding premarital sex changed over the past several decades (Cherlin, 2020). In the 1970s, society became more individualistic and more self-oriented (Brooks, 2020). This transformational change significantly weakened the societal norm of



unmarried individuals abstaining from sexual intercourse (Cherlin, 2020). In 1973, 70% of respondents to the General Social Survey believed that premarital sex was always wrong (T. W. Smith et al., 2019). This belief instilled marriage with an institutional power to organize sexual behavior (Cherlin, 2020). However, in 2002 by the age of 20, 75% of respondents had engaged in premarital sex (Finer, 2007). This drastic change eroded the institutional power of marriage (Cherlin, 2020). Finer (2007) explained that 95% of respondents have had premarital sex by the age of 44. This change in the societal view of premarital sex is another example of how the establishment of marriage has eroded, resulting in the acceptance of different family structures (Cherlin, 2020).

These societal changes have consequences for the marriage and family structures in which children are raised. Peterson and Bush (2013) explained this phenomenon as families developing novel structures to satisfy needs for establishing connections while also practicing autonomy. Connections were previously satisfied with extended family and religious gatherings, but as described above, these aspects of connectedness have dissipated as a societal norm. Autonomy and individualism are a growing societal trend with consequences for family structures (Carlson, 2017). Individualism is the concept that a person seeks independence through individual rights, personal experiences, and psychological independence (Peterson & Bush, 2013). The societal trend toward individualism is apparent in family structures with more mobility, such as single parents, cohabitation, and same-sex unions.

### **Family Structure Research**

As family structures have evolved over the past century in American society, researchers have studied their effects on students. One of the first studies was in 1930, investigating if there was a difference in IQ scores between one- and two-parent children (Sutherland, 1930).

Although Sutherland (1930) found a difference in scores, the findings did not distinguish between the different kinds of one-parent families. However, this was the beginning of the study of the relationship between family structure and academic achievement (Jeynes, 2002). Later in that decade, Fortes (1933) conducted a study on stepfamilies and the relationship with juvenile delinquency. Fortes's research began the inquiry into the family structure and its effects on student discipline. These significant research inquiries began in the 1930s, but few studies followed until World War II concluded (Jeynes, 2002). Before World War II, non-nuclear families were not commonplace, but this phenomenon became more prevalent as a result of the war (Jeynes, 2002).

With the departure of many young men during World War II and the temporary surge in marital divorce, more research was conducted on differing family structures (Jeynes, 2002). W. C. Smith (1945) investigated the psychological adjustment of stepchild encounters. Nye (1952) examined gender, sibling number, and maternal workforce participation of single-parent households and how students adjust to these variables. Nye's research began the narrative that broken homes result in lower student adjustment. Carlsmith (1964, 1973) continued this line of research by studying parental absence and its effects on academic achievement. Carlsmith's (1964, 1973) findings provided further evidence that parental absence negatively affected academic achievement. The adverse effects of parental absence were reinforced by Salzman (1987), who found that divorce had a significant negative effect on educational achievement. Wallerstein and Lewis (1998) conducted a longitudinal study on marital separation and found that the impact of divorce on academic achievement is substantial. Wallerstein and Lewis's research is viewed as one of the most significant contributions to marital separation research in the field (Jeynes, 2002).

During the turn of the century, researchers began to refocus on family structure and its effects on other educational aspects. Israel et al. (2001) studied the influence of family structure and social capital and found that both parents being present in the home positively affect social capital. This research provided the narrative that state and local governments should consider sending resources to public schools so that they can invest in enhancing the family's capacity to provide an environment to promote education (Israel et al., 2001). Jeynes (2002, 2005) continued research on family structure and academics, but also investigated parental involvement. Jeynes (2005) found that family structure was still the single most significant predictor of students' academic achievement.

Within the last decade, Sun and Li (2009, 2011) provided the most influential and cited research on the topic of the interaction between education and family structure. Sun and Li (2011) found that a lack of parent investment can explain educational disadvantages, whether financial, human capital, or social investment, on behalf of the parent. Other researchers have built on this research to investigate types of educational disadvantages. Cuffe et al. (2017) looked at truancy and how absenteeism is higher among single-parent families. K. Gordon and Fefer (2019) investigated student discipline as a result of family structure and found a negative correlation between school climate and discipline infractions. Truebridge (2016) provided inquiries into the resilience of students. Finally, Garbacz et al. (2017) researched family engagement in education and whether that impacts student outcomes.

Within the past 2 years, more research has been conducted on family structure. Smock and Schwartz (2020) stated that the family is always in a state of transition and further identified cohabitation and stepfamilies as constituting most family structures with births. The changing dichotomy in births resulted in an evolution of the modern family and an eroding nuclear family,

for which schools must account (Miller, 2020). Lim et al. (2019) explained that the creation of non-nuclear families has resulted in households with adults who do not contribute financially, which leaves the family at an economic disadvantage compared to their nuclear counterparts. This development is significant because the family's success depends more on family functioning than family structure (Lin et al., 2019). Raley and Sweeney (2020) surmised that divorce contributes to the socioeconomic and gender-based inequalities prevalent today in the literature. This finding is important because some research shows that family structure itself is not the determining factor in children's well-being, but economic well-being is critical (Rodríguez Sánchez, 2019). As researchers continue to understand the growing phenomenon of family structure in America, one thing is clear; the nontraditional family is the actual American family structure in the 21st century (Dominguez-Martinez et al., 2020). Therefore, educational institutions must adapt to serve this American family. The next section will address current research to this degree.

### **Research on Educational Outcomes**

With the changing structure of the family being inconsistent over the years, an in-depth evaluation of education's effects is needed. Parental resources for educational investment, including time, energy, and finances, are diluted as the number of children increase (Lee et al., 2020). This dilution becomes even more significant with disruptions in the family structure (Gibson-Davis, 2016). Disruptions in the family can result in financial restraints. In a longitudinal study, Sun and Li (2011) posited that children with multiple disruptions to their family structure had lower math performance than did those without multiple disruptions. Sun and Li (2011) looked at children in kindergarten in 1998, which would be the beginning of Generation Z students. One of the challenges of children with disruptions to the family structure

was family resources (Sun & Li, 2009). Therefore, Sun and Li (2011) suggested that parental investment into their child's education can lead to success; however, if parents do not have the resources to provide these supports due to disruptions in the family structure, parental investment is not significant. This will be discussed more in the next section.

Pong and Ju (2000) found that income was a significant indicator of those students who would drop out of school if they were in a disrupted home. The disruptions in the family are not a minute situation. In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau found that 67.4% of children younger than 18 lived in a two-parent family, compared to 1970 when 85% of children lived in a two-parent family (Cavanagh, 2012). These numbers represent Generation Z's family structure, but could be even more drastic when stepparents are involved in the family structure. With stepparents, the family can be considered a two-parent family. With a growing number of family structures resulting in non-nuclear families and disruptions in nuclear families resulting in lower academic performance, further research is needed to help provide stable learning environments for students.

Disruptions in the family can result in negative academic performance. The research on whether that negative performance affects a child long-term is clear. In the short term, parental separation has resulted in a lower GPA, poorer mental health, and increased participation in risky activities (Hussey et al., 2016). Parental separation does not affect academic aptitudes; instead, it significantly inhibits the child's adjustment (Corrás et al., 2017). School adjustment is the child's commitment to education, school, and learning (Corrás et al., 2017). Children with parental separation were also more likely not to graduate college on time. As a result, educational attainment is severely inhibited in the form of college attendance (Devor et al., 2018). If a child is fortunate enough to attend college, their income and graduating on time also correlate to

negative effects that can hinder the child long-term (Hussey et al., 2016; Kreidl et al., 2017). Hussey et al. (2016) suggested policies to provide incentives to families to remain intact and stable. School districts should consider leadership approaches that could negate students' negative effects to put them on a future success path.

Family structure is not limited to just the United States. In Spain, a substantial change in families' organization is due to marital breakups and extramarital births (Santin & Sicilia, 2016). Santin and Sicilia (2016) compared Spanish nuclear families to non-nuclear Spanish families and found that family structure had a significant effect on grade retention and math test scores. However, this research was limited because of the classifications of the disruptions. Arenas (2017) investigated a more specific disruption in the nuclear family; that is, grandparents' coresidence and its effects on grandchildren's educational progression. Arenas evaluated Mexican households and found that grandparents provided a service to their grandchildren by improving academic performance when the father was absent due to disruption in the family structure.

All non-nuclear families do not experience negative academic performance. Gautam (2013) found that family size, such as larger families, optimizes academic performance; but contrary to previous research, he also found that single families are optimal for student achievement. Research has shown that income level influences students' academic performance (Pong & Ju, 2000). However, Gautam's research pushed back on that conclusion, finding that upper-middle-class income level negatively affects a student's achievement level. This finding is contrary to the common belief that more money can result in better academic achievement because more resources are available to those students. Gautam's surmised that financial constraints on the family might not influence academic performance and could be beneficial

information for schools in their efforts to negate the adverse effects associated with non-nuclear families. Hadfield, Amos, et al. (2018) found that stress is the mediating factor in the relationship between family transitions and child outcomes, concluding that the influence outcomes are more behavioral and emotional, not necessarily cognitive and academic. This finding counters leading research and can provide schools with another way to help students from disrupted homes.

Research shows a connection between family structure and academic success (Cavanagh, 2012; Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018; Santin & Sicilia, 2016; Sun & Li, 2011). Educational institutions should find ways to negate the negative implications when a disruption in the family occurs. Different researchers have tried to address this very question (Mac Iver et al., 2015; Myers & Myers, 2015; Wagmiller et al., 2010). The most common response is to encourage parental engagement. Therefore, parental engagement, referred to in this study as parental investment, is discussed further in the next section.

Some of the Generation Z youth are being raised in urban areas where the neighborhoods are more diverse, giving them exposure to different cultural perspectives (Turner, 2015). Neighborhoods can also play a key role in providing disrupted families with harmful factors. Ainsworth (2002) found that social isolation and disorganization have a negative effect on education because of subcultures and a lack of social control. With non-nuclear families having to work more for additional resources, this means that children are left on their own without parental supervision, increasing the effects of neighborhood influences on the child's upbringing. According to Ainsworth, "With limited adult supervision, peer-group influences may become stronger relative to parental influence. If this is the case, subcultures that resist mainstream (adult) culture—including school norms—are more likely to develop" (p. 120). Ainsworth found that neighborhood deprivations hindered educational outcomes and advantaged neighborhoods

established value around education and thus increased educational outcomes. This finding is significant for non-nuclear families who are already at risk for lower academic achievement.

One area in which a school could negate the negative association of academics and disrupted families is school culture. O'Malley et al. (2015) found that school climate can negate the negative correlations between family structure and academics, and that school climate perceptions had a positive correlation with a student's GPA. O'Malley et al.'s research could provide a mediating factor for schools with a large population of non-nuclear families. A single parent usually faces loneliness, poverty, and insecurity (Gioumouki et al., 2018). However, a welcoming and accommodating school culture can reduce the negative associations found with parental separation (Gioumouki et al., 2018). By making a conscious effort through the staff's professional development to improve school culture and climate, schools could moderate the effects of a student's family structure (Gioumouki et al., 2018).

### **Parental Investment**

Hornby (2011) suggested that the most effective schools engage parents in the learning process. Establishing this partnership between the school and the parents creates a team focused on helping the student learn. In addition, Hornby mentioned how parents can become involved and how schools can encourage this involvement, but did not provide research suggesting that this relationship is genuinely beneficial. Mac Iver et al. (2015) attempted to complement Hornby's work by finding five forms of parental involvement that increased student achievement. According to Mac Iver et al., the five forms of parental involvement were "monitoring teens' academic and social life, evaluating the information obtained about the teen, helping the teen with schoolwork, creating positive peer networks with the teen, and participating directly at school" (p. 31).



Murray et al. (2014) separated parental investment into two categories, home-based and school-based. The home-based investment includes helping with homework, providing learning resources, and encouraging the child's participation in extracurriculars (Martin et al., 2010; Murray et al., 2014; Simons et al., 2016). School-based investments, such as volunteering at the school, taking responsibility for developing a strong relationship with teachers, and acting as an advocate for the child, are all positive investments that a parent can make to increase child outcomes (Jezierski & Wall, 2019). Pinquart (2016) identified specific parental investment behaviors aimed at directly promoting academic achievement, such as communication with the child about school issues, as a home-based approach. Another effective way of encouraging academic performance includes promoting school-specific parental investment (Pinquart, 2016).

Education serves to transmit social advantages or disadvantages from one generation to the next (Hannum & Xie, 2016). There is a significant relationship between families and academic achievement (Reschly & Christenson, 2018). This relationship exemplifies the strong correlation between family investment in education and academic achievement. It is rational for families to invest in their child's education because it is likely that this investment will yield good economic returns (Hannum & Xie, 2016). Parenting style and learning support account for academic achievement aspects that all include a facet of parental investment (Reschly & Christenson, 2018). Children with parents who participate in their child's education through parental investment are more likely to have better grades and fewer behavioral and social issues (Garbacz et al., 2017). All three aspects of child development (academic, behavioral, and social) play critical roles in education. How a student behaves is predicated on parent behavior, parental support for education, and parent-child interactions, all of which are types of parental investment (Reschly & Christenson, 2019). These parental investment behaviors and support are related to a

child's academic achievement as well (Baidoo-Anu et al., 2019). Myers and Myers (2017) surmised that even though it is acknowledged that parental investment is beneficial, the family structure still plays a key role. Nuclear families with parental investment make more academic improvements than do non-nuclear families with parental investment (Myers & Myers, 2017). Therefore, parental investment yields positive outcomes for a child's academic and economic future. This study will serve to investigate what barriers are in place to halt parents from investing in their children.

The ways that investment in children's education is defined and portrayed is consistent with middle-class parenting practices. A parent's ability to create a reading culture in the home, spend time engaging their child with thoughtful discussion, create at-home learning opportunities, and develop positive relationships with the child's teachers is dependent on time and material resources (Jezierski & Wall, 2019). These resources are skewed toward middle- and upper-class families as well as having the self-confidence and social capital to accomplish these investment tasks (Jezierski & Wall, 2019). However, non-nuclear families do not have the resources, such as time or finances, to help their children increase their academic achievement through parental investment (Myers & Myers, 2015). Work often serves as a barrier for parents to devote time to attend school functions such as parent-teacher conferences, parent involvement activities, or volunteer opportunities at the school (Mannan & Blackwell, 1992; Murray et al., 2014; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Non-nuclear parents cannot expect help from the government or the school district, either.

Israel et al. (2001) pointed out that rarely, if ever, does the government, whether state or local, provide resources to public schools to enhance families' capacity to support an environment that promotes low-income children's education. Children share this concern about a

lack of resources to be successful. Children hold deep concerns about lacking the essential school materials, not having an adult at home who could assist them with their homework or school issues, and distress about money and the burden of their educational costs on their strapped parents (Hannum & Xie, 2016).

As income increases, so does parental investment and resources for the child, resulting in more effective academic skills (Child Trends, 2018). However, financial concerns are not the only barriers parents face in investing in their child's education. According to Hamlin and Flessa (2018), many parents face obstacles to parental investment in the forms of lack of familiarity with the school system, challenges communicating with school staff, and cultural differences. Parents may also find barriers in the form of work, family responsibilities, multiple jobs, and the lack of leave benefits (Murray et al., 2014). All these barriers are further compounded for low-income parents due to severe time and resource constraints (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). Finally, motivational beliefs can play the role of a barrier to parental investment; for example, role construction of parenthood, parents' attitudes toward education, and their beliefs about their role in education can influence parental investment and serve as barriers (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Murray et al., 2014).

As these barriers and others exist for all parents, they are further exacerbated for parents with economic issues (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). The educational system's functions in modern society include imparting knowledge, socializing children, and transmitting family advantages and disadvantages (Hannum & Xie, 2016). Therefore, although parental investment is positively associated with academic achievement, economic difference affects how much parent investment can be presented and carried on from generation to generation (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019). Parents' socioeconomic status significantly predicts how they can invest in their

children (McLoyd et al., 2016). These socioeconomic gaps are found throughout parental investment literature (McLoyd et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2019; A. B. Williams, 2016; Wolf & McCoy, 2019). Therefore, some non-nuclear families are stuck in a low-income cycle that will be passed down from generation to generation, with the educational field reinforcing the classism that exists (Briscoe & De Oliver, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to describe the shared experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators' efforts to assist non-nuclear parents through parental investment barriers. School administrators' perspectives are essential because they can influence all major school decisions (Spruance et al., 2020). The school administrators' role is important because barriers exist within the educational institution as well. Teacher perceptions of parental involvement can adversely impact parental investment (Thompson et al., 2017). School administrators can address this barrier through encouraging parental investment by connecting teachers and parents (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020). As highly instrumental individuals crafting the school's culture, school administrators can direct educational efforts that encourage open and honest relationships between the school and the home through teacher engagement (Lazaridou & Gravani Kassisa, 2015). Parents have shown that they can change their parental investment levels (McDowall et al., 2017). Parents are more likely to become engaged and invested in their child's education if the schools' leadership is perceived as welcoming and supportive (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). School administrators have the ability to create a culture responsive to this call (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014).

However, school administrators are not immune to parental investment barriers. Principals have been identified as desiring parental investment, but focusing more on what parents "should" do instead of what the school can do to help assist those parents (Ferrara, 2011).

School administrators are faced with encouraging the part that families play in the achievement gap, but must also defend their self-image as a leader (Briscoe & De Oliver, 2012).

Unfortunately, school administrators have addressed this conflict by scapegoating low-income families to avoid being portrayed as a poor leader (Briscoe & De Oliver, 2012). Instead, school administrators could address parental barriers by finding ways to lead parents past the obstacles they have in the way of parental investment. An and Sorensen (2017) suggested that low-income parents could be encouraged to participate in nutritional assistance programs to address the financial barriers that may be in place. Huang and Cornell (2018) called on school administrators to lead through responsiveness and demandingness, which have shown to result in higher achieving students. However, research is limited on leadership practices to address parental barriers to the specific population of non-nuclear families.

### **Leadership Styles and Practices**

Leadership paradigms have continued to change through the 21st century as modern organizations' complexity grows (Razik & Swanson, 2010). A leader is expected to be a change factor in a modern organization that facilitates, collaborates, and promotes diversity (Buzdar & Fatima, 2018). School leadership is fundamental to the educational institution's functioning and aspects of educational improvement (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Leadership practices are based on leadership styles that vary throughout the literature. However, something common across studies is that school leaders' leadership style must be linked to their relationship with those they attempt to lead (Ch et al., 2017; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). The leadership style that a school leader selects is not as important as the leadership practices that are enacted (Bello et al., 2016).

Makgato and Mudzanani (2019) investigated four major leadership theories in school leadership: task-oriented, relationship-oriented, path-goal, and functional. Task-oriented leadership includes putting the task at hand as the main emphasis, whereas relationship-oriented leadership emphasizes developing a good relationship with the followers (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Path-goal leadership is based on motivational theory and is focuses on the leader's ability to identify the followers' motivations (House & Mitchell, 1975). Based on those motivations, the school leader identifies achievement-oriented, directive, participative, or supportive leadership practices or a combination of the four (Olowoselu et al., 2019). Functional leadership theory is when a leader ensures that the group needs are addressed and deemphasizes who leads instead of focusing on completing the task at hand (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). From these leadership theories evolve leadership styles which school leaders can implement.

Democratic leadership style ensures that all followers participate in the decision-making process (Ch et al., 2017). The democratic leadership style is ubiquitous in secondary schools (Buzdar & Fatima, 2018). Ch et al. (2017) found that democratic leadership styles resulted in positive job satisfaction with teachers. This finding resulted from the democratic leadership style making followers feel valued as part of the decision-making process (Ch et al., 2017). Counter to a democratic leadership style is an authoritarian or autocratic leadership style. Authoritarian leadership style includes the leader as the central power figure and the sole authority (Razik & Swanson, 2010). This type of leadership style is prevalent in schools, but negatively affects teacher satisfaction (Buzdar & Fatima, 2018; Ch et al., 2017).

Laissez-faire leadership is a lesser-used leadership style within schools, but can be found in educational institutions (Buzdar & Fatima, 2018). The laissez-faire leadership style includes delegation as its main application, allowing followers the freedom to make decisions for the

organization (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Transformational leadership provides more structure than laissez-faire leadership by allowing the leader to be an agent of change in focusing on the organization's visions and goals (Razik & Swanson, 2010). In transformational leadership, leadership is no longer a particular position, but encompasses interactions within the educational structure that allow the committee or group of followers to achieve the organization's goals (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019).

School leaders, such as principals, have great leadership responsibility, and the ability to institute change within the school and maintain a positive school culture to foster learning (Okeze et al., 2018). The selection and use of a leadership theory and style are essential to ensure successful leadership. Studies have shown that a combination of democratic and transformational leadership styles is most effective in school leadership (Buzdar & Fatima, 2018; Ch et al., 2017; Obama et al., 2016; Olowoselu et al., 2019). Leadership practices fall within these leadership styles and theories. School leaders are highly instrumental in creating a school culture, a welcoming environment, and parents' supportive involvement (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Lazaridou & Gravani Kassida, 2015). The application of leadership practices, based on leadership theory and style, is essential for positive interactions with parents, students, and staff (Olowoselu et al., 2019).

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Implications**

The environment in which this study will take place is different from any other educational environment in the past. The COVID-19 pandemic that spread in 2020 resulted in school closures nationwide in March 2020. Schools remained closed for the remainder of the year and, depending on the different parts of the country, either will remain closed, open up with hybrid learning plans, or open in a face-to-face format with strict safety protocols

(Psacharopoulos et al., 2020). This has resulted in a changing educational environment that affects not only the education of the child, but also the families. The effects of school closures will have social, economic, and behavioral consequences that will be long-lasting (Ghosh et al., 2020). School administrators will be tasked with addressing these consequences as they attempt to provide an equal education for all students.

For non-nuclear families, the additional stress and instability of the COVID-19 pandemic can exacerbate adaptation issues in school-related activities (Lebow, 2020). Families are central to the child's education, and the different family structures result in substantial disparities in the extent to which the family can assist the child's learning (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). Those schools that are returning in a hybrid environment or remote environment require technologies for distance learning. However, access to technology requires financial resources by the family to purchase the device and internet as well as human capital resources to allow the child to use the device while the parent is either working from home or monitored by a form of child care (Viner et al., 2020). This additional barrier has led to further inequalities as financially strapped families found even more significant financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic (Williamson et al., 2020). Technology cannot fix social inequality; it can only further the divide (Williamson et al., 2020). Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the inequality of human and social capital that families may put forth to invest in their child's education (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020).

In addition to the technology issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, other inequalities have resulted. Non-nuclear families are associated with lower income levels (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). During the pandemic, children living in lower-income levels have shown great vulnerability to food insecurity and more significant economic strain (Van Lancker & Parolin,



2020). Previous recessions have shown that economic strain may have long-lasting consequences for a child's health, wellbeing, and learning outcomes (Cantillon et al., 2017). Therefore, school administrators are tasked with providing quality education in a safe environment upon schools reopening and addressing the inequalities that may result from students' further socioeconomic divide. Schools that are returning to in-person or hybrid educational plans need to focus on the loss in learning and target children at a more significant disadvantage due to insufficient resources, whether human, financial, or social (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020).

Marital breakdowns that result in divorce stem from stressors such as financial issues (Neppl et al., 2016), marital dissatisfaction (Dew et al., 2012), and partner physical illness (Daniel et al., 2009). Furthermore, due to quarantine requirements, personality traits that may further strain a marriage are even more vulnerable during the pandemic (Randall & Bodenmann, 2017). All of these stressors are significantly more likely during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could increase marital breakdowns (Prime et al., 2020). Brown et al. (2020) found that most parents experienced higher levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms during the pandemic. Concerns of child safety have also been raised as economic strains have resulted in additional parental stress, abuse, and violence against children (Cluver et al., 2020). As a result, school administrators must be cognizant of students' changing home life and the additional stressors those students bring to school daily in a prepandemic school environment.

### **Gaps in the Research**

There has been significant research on how family structure affects student learning outcomes. However, there is not much research on how school administrators have experienced the effect of family structure on academic outcomes. Myers and Myers (2015) provided insight into parental involvement being significant to student learning outcomes: "Future research will

need to consider the overlapping spheres of and connections between families and schools” (p. 129). Mac Iver et al. (2015) also investigated how engaging families can support students, but did not delve deep enough to identifying specific programs or cultures that could be mediating factors.

Further research is needed to identify leadership practices and specific characteristics of school culture to mediate the negative effects that students from non-nuclear families are currently facing. Limited research has been completed on Generation Z and their effect on education (Turner, 2015), mainly due to the limited time Generation Z has been in the classroom. However, further research is needed to fully understand Generation Z’s family structure and how school administrators adjust their leadership style to assist non-nuclear families.

### **Biblical Worldview**

A Christian biblical worldview can help explain marriage’s strength and the support system for children to succeed in school. “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the Lord” (King James Version, Proverbs 19:14). In the Christian worldview, a wife is a gift from God, and separation from one’s wife rejects that gift from God. Establishing a nuclear family is a directive from God, and He commands us multiple times throughout the Bible to bear children. This is not to say that maintaining the nuclear family will be easy. “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?” (New International Version, Hebrews 12:7). Therefore, not only is the establishment of the nuclear family and the bearing of children pleasurable to the Lord, but maintaining that family structure by battling through the hardships praises Him.

In his analysis of the Christian worldview, Sire (2009) established that God is the source of all morality. Theism teaches that to live a good and moral life, one must obey God’s word and

live up to His standard. This morality does not change due to societal or cultural changes; God's standard is straightforward and does not waver (Sire, 2009). Any research conducted on family structure and the raising of children should include the Christian worldview.

The current state of marriage and its role in childbearing is a pure naturalist worldview. Naturalists will live their lives following their community's norms instead of living their lives to please any God or gods (Sire, 2009). For a naturalist, ethics are views that are acceptable in the surrounding culture (Sire, 2009). Naturalists have a permissive attitude to premarital and extramarital sex, which differs from the Christian worldview (Sire, 2009, p. 76). Through this worldview, childbearing is seen as a result of sex instead of as God's gift. This view of sex diminishes the value of having children resulting in the formation of a nuclear family not being a priority for raising the child. As we study the structure of family and its implications on a child's educational outcome, we must keep in mind the naturalist view.

### **Summary**

A majority of families in the United States are non-nuclear families (Cavanagh, 2012; Hadfield, Unger, & Nixon, 2018). The Generation Z family is a very diverse family structure with biracial, multiracial, and same-sex parents in addition to other non-nuclear family structures (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). With this growing realization, educational institutions need to change how they best serve their students. Many studies show that a disruption in the family structure or family structure alone affects a student's educational outcomes (Cavanagh, 2012; Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018; Santin & Sicilia, 2016; Sun & Li, 2011). Also, non-nuclear families are faced with barriers to being invested in their child's education and schooling (Gibson-Davis, 2016). Leadership practices specifically to address this growing, underserved population are limited, if not non-existent. Leadership research in schools is mainly focused on change agents, student

achievement, and teacher satisfaction (Ch et al., 2017; Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Olowoselu et al., 2019). Further research is needed to understand leadership practices better to assist non-nuclear families overcome their parental investment barriers. In addition, schools must address this growing societal development and lack of leadership research.

Limited research has shown that school culture may mediate the negative association between family structure and educational outcomes (O'Malley et al., 2015). There is also support for the idea that school programming can reduce this negative correlation (Hornby, 2011; Mac Iver et al., 2015). More research is needed to support the idea that school administrators can mediate negative factors associated with non-nuclear households through school culture and school programming. Through this research, schools can serve their students and community better by raising their students' academic achievement.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. This chapter explicates the various research methods that were used in conducting this transcendental phenomenological study. The purpose of using a transcendental phenomenological design and justification for settings, participants, and procedures, are explained in this chapter. Also presented is the role of the researcher, the researcher's interest in the topic, and ethical considerations. This chapter includes a full discussion of the data collection methods and data analysis procedures.

### **Design**

Qualitative research serves to identify a holistic account of the phenomenon and interpretation of the meaning-making process (Patton, 2015). I used qualitative design to describe the complex interactions of multiple factors to understand the intricate picture of school administrator experiences regarding parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. School administrators are at a level within the educational system that they have lived experiences with the different factors I addressed in this study. Through the qualitative research design, I presented a holistic account of the school administrators' experiences and describe the essence of what they experienced collectively.

Phenomenological research describes a common meaning from lived experience for a group of individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There is ample research on the non-nuclear family structure and its impact on academic performance, but the child's education is more than academic success (An & Sorensen, 2017; Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019;

Laursen et al., 2019). The research is also limited in explaining the phenomenon of parental investment barriers from a school administrator's perspective. This qualitative study gave a voice to the school through the school administrators. The in-depth design of a qualitative study provides a deeper look into the experiences school administrators have had with parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. This study also addressed how school administrators perceive their leadership practices impact assisting non-nuclear families with parental investment barriers.

A transcendental phenomenological research design is used to examine the participants' experiences and deduce their statements into emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental research approach was best suited for this study because it allowed me to gather rich and in-depth descriptions of the school administrators' experiences while also described the overall essence and meaning of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). One aspect that is a significant distinction of transcendental phenomenological research design is that the researcher engages in epoché (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché allows the researcher to further the study without the constraints of preconceptions, prior knowledge, or personal beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Case study and phenomenological research designs are similar because they both serve to study several individuals who share in an experience. However, I did not select a case study approach because the focus for this research is the school administrators' lived experience regarding parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. A case study would have helped describe parental investment barriers and provide an understanding of why such barriers exist. Although this would have been a great study and needed within the literature, it was not the focus or design of this study.

Narrative research explores the life of a single individual (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research approach would have limited the study to one individual and not provide a holistic picture of the phenomenon. Another possible research design is ethnography. I did not select ethnography because it is limited to a culture-sharing group, and my intent was to gather the shared lived experiences of school administrators regardless of cultural background (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I did not choose these other research approaches because they would have limited my ability to focus on the school administrators' experiences. Other approaches would also have limited my ability to produce data with in-depth meaning about the essence of school administrators' experiences with the phenomenon of parental investment barriers with non-nuclear families.

I conducted this study using an advocacy worldview with the ultimate goal of making schools aware of the challenges that parents of non-nuclear families face in the form of investment as well as to help create a dialog about how schools can address these challenges through leadership. I selected the transcendental phenomenological design for this study because it required me to bracket out my experiences and reduce the phenomenon in its singularity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). By bracketing out my experiences (described below), I avoided bias and prejudgments and saw the phenomena for the first time through a school administrator's eyes. Through reduction, I was able to derive textual descriptions of the essence of the phenomenon.

Ronald Pelias explained that reflexive writing is ethically and politically self-aware while making the researcher a part of the inquiry (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflexivity allows the researcher to position one's self in the qualitative study and convey how their experiences inform their interpretation of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have lived in

Central Pennsylvania my entire life, which has provided me with prior knowledge of the area's cultural beliefs. My personal experience as an educator has influenced my beliefs on parental investment in education.

### **Research Questions**

This study was an examination of the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators' efforts to assist non-nuclear parents through parental investment barriers. High school administrator will be defined as an individual serving in an administrative role for Grades 7 through 12. The following research questions were used to understand the lived experiences of school administrators regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families.

### **CRQ**

What is the essence of Central Pennsylvania school administrators' shared lived experiences regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families?

### **SQs**

SQ1: What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding the impact of parental investment on expectations for non-nuclear families in social settings?

SQ2: What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding the impact of motivation on parental investment for non-nuclear families?

SQ3: What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions of their ability to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers?

### **Setting**

I conducted this study in Central Pennsylvania and select 12 sites based on the criteria of small, medium, and large schools. I considered a small school as having less than 600 students,



medium schools were between 601 and 1,000 students, and large schools were more than 1,000 students. Central Pennsylvania is limited in diversity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018b, 2018c). I used pseudonyms for each school to protect their identity and the participants' privacy. Finally, I selected the 12 schools listed below to participate based on their experiences with non-nuclear families and various leadership structures.

### **Large Schools**

I selected the large secondary schools because of their leadership structure. Each of the large high schools was located in Central Pennsylvania and consisted of more than five school administrators. The schools' additional administrators and size made these selections unique as they had more resources available to them than the middle or small schools selected. Washington High School serves an urban community and consists of over 3,000 students in Grades 7–12 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). This school district has a 90% White population and 7.2% African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Eisenhower High School is highly populated for the region, even though it serves a suburban community. The school consists of over 1,500 students in Grades 7–12 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2020). Eisenhower is predominately White (94.8%), with only 1% of the population identifying as African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Kennedy High School is another large school consisting of over 1,200 students, 95.9% of whom are White, and only 0.8% African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Kennedy High School serves a suburban community that neighbors a large university. Adams High School is the setting of the last large school and serves an urban community. The school district has diverse demographics, with 54.8% of the students identifying as White and 30.8% as African American, with 85.1% being economically disadvantaged (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018).

## Medium Schools

Jackson High School is located 20 minutes from the nearest city and comprises a large geographic area. The population is mainly farmers and the middle to lower class. The school consists of over 800 students in Grades 7–12 and is predominately White, with 97.2% of the students identifying as White (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Jackson High School is considered a medium school for this study, and I selected this high school because of its recent consolidation in which the school district combined middle and high schools with parental input. Another medium school is Monroe High School, which is predominately White (97.6%) and consists of a little over 800 students (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Monroe High School has 26% of its student population as economically disadvantaged (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). The last two medium high schools I selected because of their high economically disadvantaged percentages. These two schools provided a contrasting perspective to the other medium high schools. Tyler High School is a medium school located in the suburb of a highly-populated area and has experienced the migration of middle- to upper-class individuals into the district. The school consists of approximately 730 students in Grades 7–12, with 29.7% of the student population identifying as economically disadvantaged (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Tyler is also predominately White (92.4%), with only 2.5% of the population identifying as African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). The last middle-sized school identified in the study is Martin High School, with over 641 students of which 97.7% are White and 0.5% are African American; 37.4% being economically disadvantaged (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018).

## **Small Schools**

In this study, I identified small schools as those with a student population in Grades 7–12 of less than 600. All of the small schools selected had three administrators. Due to the low number of administrators (Ballotpedia, 2015), the school administrators sampled had an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Lincoln High School was the largest of the small schools in the study, with 520 students (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Lincoln is predominately White, with 98.8% of the student population identifying as such, but has diversity in the form of 75% of graduates pursuing secondary education, military service, or work after high school, which is below the state average of 84% (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Taylor High School is a small school located on the outskirts of Pierce City which is the location of Adams School District. Taylor High School is 64% economically disadvantaged and 85% White, with only 6% of the student population identifying as African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Taylor High School serves a student population of 285 students (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Fillmore High School is another small high school serving a student population of 333 students in Grades 7–12 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Fillmore is not very diverse, with 92.3% of the students identifying as White and 1.9% as African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). Finally, Polk High School was the smallest high school in the study, with 290 students, 98.6% White and 0.3% African American (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018).

## **Participants**

Participants for this study were determined based on their experience with the phenomenon within the selected sites. Once permission from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB; Appendix A) and the school districts (Appendix B) was granted, I

disseminated the screening survey (Appendix C). The dissemination of the screening survey was through emails provided by the superintendents to the selected sites' administrative teams. The screening survey helped determine which administrators were willing to participate in the study. Validity of the screening survey was addressed in the pilot study of two school administrators prior to data collection and participant selection. Participants were selected based on the criteria that they had at least 5 years of administration experience and had knowledge of parental investment and family structure.

Through purposeful sampling, a researcher selects participants based on desirable options (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The purposeful sampling strategy used for this study was a key knowledgeable strategy. Key knowledgeable sampling enables the researcher to identify trends and future directions of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). A key knowledgeable individual is an individual who has specific knowledge about the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The individual should be erudite so that the researcher can understand the phenomenon as experienced by the individual (Patton, 2015). The individual should also be willing to share their knowledge and provide valuable expertise and insights into the problem (Patton, 2015).

For this study, the participants had significant knowledge and experience with parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. To determine which individuals had essential knowledge applicable to the study, I gave the school administrators at the sites a screening survey (Appendix C). From the screening survey, I selected the participants based on their experience with the phenomena. Participants then chose to partake in the study by signing an informed consent document (Appendix D). Selecting school administrators with more than 5 years of experience in administration and knowledge of family structure increased the likelihood that the participant had experienced non-nuclear family and parental investment barriers while

being knowledgeable about the phenomenon.

For this study, I considered 12 sites, and I selected participants from each site. The desired sample size for a transcendental phenomenological study is 12–15 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Collectively the sites had 64 administrators, and a 20% response rate was needed for at least 12 participants. This study had 12 participants and data saturation was achieved. Burmeister and Aitken (2012) stated that sample size is not correlated with data saturation, and data saturation is obtained through the content attained, not by meeting a quota of participants. Therefore, for this study, data saturation was valued more than the goal of 12 participants. Once the participants were selected, I notified the participants and established dates and times to conduct individual interviews. Participants were provided a pseudonym for the study, and I also provided a pseudonym for their school to ensure participant privacy.

### **Procedures**

Before any data collection, I obtained approval from the Liberty University IRB and the participating sites. I did not collect data until IRB approval (Appendix A) and site approval (Appendix B) were obtained. Although 12 participants were desired for a successful study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), data saturation was required for this study to be successful. I contacted superintendents through email addresses, gained from the district's website, at the identified schools. When there was no response to the email after 7 days, I called and scheduled a meeting with the superintendent to discuss the study and my desire to include their school. After the superintendent agreement, permission to contact their school administrators by email was requested upon IRB and site approval.

Once I received IRB approval, I had experts in the field review the individual interview questions, focus group interview questions, and writing prompt questions to clarify questions and

wording and conducted a pilot study with the reviewed questions. Then, I recruited participants by utilizing a purposeful and key knowledgeable sampling strategy. I emailed a recruitment letter (Appendix E) to the school administrators in the high schools with the email addresses provided by the districts' superintendents. I then emailed the screening survey (Appendix C) to identify administrators in the building with experience applicable to the study and at least 5 years of administration experience. A follow-up recruitment letter was sent after a week without a response (Appendix F). To ensure a successful study, 12 participants were desired and obtained (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

After selecting participants through the screening process, I emailed letters of informed consent (Appendix D) to administrators identified for the study. Upon completion and return of the informed consent, I scheduled individual interviews at the convenience of and location chosen by the participant. After each 60–90-minute individual interview, I produced transcripts and returned the transcript to each participant to check for accuracy. Once I amended the data according to participants' feedback, I analyzed the transcriptions.

Focus group questions were amended based on the analysis of transcriptions, and I scheduled a focus group session. The focus group interview took place at a centralized location agreed to by the selected participants. The focus group interview was audio-recorded, and I transcribed the audio verbatim.

All participants were e-mailed a follow-up document asking the participant to respond in written form to questions. These questions provided the school administrator with the opportunity to write their beliefs and experiences with the phenomenon without the added dimension of an interview or a focus group. The writing prompt allowed the participant to reflect and articulate their experiences precisely and directly (Elizabeth, 2008).

To ensure accurate data analysis, I developed recording procedures. For each interview's audio recording, I used two separate recorders to guarantee that the individual interview and focus group's exact responses were obtained during transcription. The audio files were then downloaded and stored on a password-protected computer and an external hard drive that was locked in a safe to which only I had access. Finally, I returned the transcription to the individual interviewees for member checking, which allowed an accurate portrayal of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **The Researcher's Role**

In phenomenological studies, the researcher is the human instrument for data collection and analysis (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher must bracket out their personal experience and biases to ensure the phenomenon's description only reflects the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The process of bracketing out one's experiences is referred to as *epoché* (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I bracketed out my experiences by being forthcoming with my personal experience and biases here.

I am currently a high school mathematics teacher and adjunct professor at the local university. Through my experiences, I have observed various student behavior and various family structures through parent-teacher conferences and parental meetings. I grew up in a traditional family structure and am currently raising my children in a traditional family structure. Despite the different upbringing between my students and me, I have observed their educational and social outcomes. One area that I had to be cautious of was attempting to understand a nontraditional family setting through a neutral lens. In my experiences, fellow educators have used a non-nuclear family structure as an excuse for a child's behavior, academic performance, and other educational outcomes.

I was born in Central Pennsylvania and have been raising my children in the area. I am familiar with the school districts in the area and the ever-changing demographics due to my profession and residential status. To avoid bias, I excluded my home school district and the district I am employed by from this study. Also, for ethical reasons I excluded districts in which I have a personal relationship with individuals who hold a leadership role.

Furthermore, I ensured that I maintained an unbiased relationship with participants and not guide the study in one direction or the other. Therefore, during the individual interview and focus group interview process, I was cognizant of my comments and facial expressions as I interacted with the participants. To verify what the researcher has transcribed, member checking can be used to ensure an accurate portrayal of the participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). After each interview, I utilized member checking to ensure that what I transcribed is precisely what the participant experienced.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection consisted of interrelated activities that served to gather good quality information to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section includes a description of the data collection activities that I implemented for this study. The study involved three data collection methods to triangulate the information and ensure trustworthiness while gathering, analyzing, and interpreting the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The methods that were implemented in this study were individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing prompt. Following is the rationale for each collection method and explanation of the selection.

The individual interviews took place first. Individual interviews began as a social conversation to make the participant feel comfortable sharing their experience (Moustakas, 1994). I developed the individual interview questions (Appendix G) with the structure of a



conversation. Once the individual interview was complete, I transcribed the audiotaped interviews verbatim and then presented the transcription via email to each participant for member checking.

After the individual interviews were completed, I identified participants for the focus group interview. I selected the focus group participants based on both their willingness to share their experiences during the individual interviews and on their varying experiences to foster deep conversation about the phenomenon. Qualitative focus group interviews should be small and consist of participants that have great experience with the phenomena (Hennink, 2007). For this study, five participants were selected for participation in the focus group. Only four participants were able to attend the focus group. I explained the focus group process to potential focus group participants. Then I scheduled a time that worked for the focus group participants and used the focus group interview questions prepared based on the literature review (Appendix H). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that focus groups are advantageous and yield the best information when the participants are similar. All participants in the study had experienced the same phenomenon (i.e., parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families within the school setting), and all participants were administrators within their schools. This similar career and phenomenon experience yielded quality data within the focus group setting. Through email, I asked for the participants' availability to identify a common time and place when we could meet. I then shared this common time and place with participants through email. After the focus group interview, I transcribed the audiotaped focus group discussion verbatim.

Finally, once the individual interviews and the focus group interview were completed, all the participants were provided a writing prompt (Appendix I). Elizabeth (2008) found that participant writing is an effective means of gathering rich data on the participants' experience

with the phenomenon. Participant writing allows the participant to express their beliefs and experiences freely and thoughtfully without the researcher present. The writing prompt presented to all the participant was focused on their beliefs about the non-nuclear families' parental investment barriers and appropriate leadership practices regarding parental investment.

### **Individual Interviews**

The individual interview process took place first because it allowed me the opportunity to build a positive relationship with each participant. Brinkmann and Kvale explained that in an interview, knowledge is transferred from the interviewee to the interviewer (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). I constructed open-ended questions focused on the research questions based on this study's central phenomenon and grounded in the literature before the individual interviews. I designed the individual interview questions to understand the participants' experiences with the phenomenon comprehensively. During the individual interviews, I inquired about the phenomenon further through follow-up questions, if needed.

I scheduled the face-to-face individual interviews in a comfortable location for the participants, determined by conversations with the participant about what place was the most convenient for them. To further ensure that the participant was comfortable, I began the individual interview by introducing myself and explaining the study details. I asked the participant to read over the individual interview questions before recording, so they were comfortable throughout the interview. Then I turned on the recorder and began the interview. I asked probing and follow-up questions throughout the interview to understand the participants' lived experience fully. After the individual interview, I thanked the participant for their participation.

I stored recordings of the participants' interviews digitally on a password-protected

computer. I transcribed each individual interview and provided the participant with the transcription for member checking. The interview was the primary source of data collection, so the accuracy of participants' experiences portrayed through the transcript was vital. The targeted time for the individual interview was 60 minutes. The following are the standardized, open-ended interview questions for this study with the central research question (CRQ) and research subquestions (SQ) addressed in parentheses.

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another and how you became an administrator.
2. What does parental investment look like to you? (CRQ)
3. What challenges have you experienced with parental investment from a non-nuclear background? (CRQ)
4. In your experience, what impact does parental investment barriers have on non-nuclear families? (CRQ)
5. What have you experienced as barriers that exist at home for non-nuclear parents to help their child with homework? Furthermore, how has the school helped with those challenges? (SQ1 & SQ2)
6. What have your experiences in the form of time, cultural differences, or familiarity with the school system that was an issue for non-nuclear parents? (SQ1 & SQ3)
7. What barriers exist for non-nuclear families that nuclear families do not encounter? (CRQ)
8. How does family structure play a role in parental investment in social settings such as extracurriculars or parent-teacher conferences? (SQ1)

9. What experiences have you had with how parents from non-nuclear households feel about the school or expectations compared to traditional families? (SQ2)
10. What are parental expectations you have experienced from non-nuclear families? (SQ1 & SQ2)
11. How does parental motivation impact parental investment specifically for non-nuclear families? (SQ2)
12. In your experiences, when assisting non-nuclear families and their children, how does providing specific expectations to the parents or child help the child become successful? (SQ3)
13. How does the school promote positive parenting or home–school collaboration? (SQ3)
14. How can you improve parental investment in your current role? (SQ3)
15. How are non-nuclear parents included in school decision-making processes, and in your opinion are there barriers that exists restricting non-nuclear parents’ ability to be included? (SQ3)
16. How prepared are you to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers? (SQ3)
17. Reflecting on your career as an administrator, what advice would you give to parents on how they can be invested in their child’s education, both academically and socially? (CQ)
18. What else would you like for me to understand as I study school administrators’ experiences with the parental investment of non-nuclear families? (CQ)

I developed the individual interview questions to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of school administrators' experiences with parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families and leadership practices to address these barriers. The goal of Question 1 was to build a relationship between myself and the participant. Background questions provide the researcher with an opportunity to follow different avenues of inquiry and are more likely to produce additional information (Harper & McCunn, 2017). Through this first question, I could understand the participant more and use probing questions for different inquiry avenues to describe the essence of the participants' experience.

Sun and Li (2011) explained that the educational disadvantage of children from a disrupted family structure could be explained by parental investment. Huang et al. (2017) found that parents high in responsiveness and demandingness have higher achieving children academically. Questions 2 and 3 emphasized the school administrators' perceptions of parental investment and academic performance. Some researchers have argued that family structure has no consequence for academics (Amato et al., 2015; Rodríguez Sánchez, 2019). At the same time, other research has shown that disrupted family structure affects academics and graduation, college enrollment (Hadfield, Amos, et al., 2018; Magnuson & Berger, 2009; McLoyd et al., 2016; Sun & Li, 2011). Question 4 asks the participant to explain the impact parental investment barriers have had on non-nuclear families in their experiences, which is the heart of SQ1.

An and Sorensen (2017) found that family structure disruptions during high school affect parental investment. Barriers to parental investment can result from a lack of economic and social resources (An & Sorensen, 2017). Hamlin and Flessa (2018) found that home-based parental involvement forms may be impeded by time and resource constraints. Home-based tasks, such as high homework assistance levels, can affect student school performance (Reschly

& Christenson, 2019). To answer Question 5, the school administrators described their experiences with home-based parental investment and perceived barriers.

Thomas et al. (2019) found that most studies break parental investment into school-based and home strategies. School-based investment in the form of school functions, decision-making, and communication is essential for student growth (Brajša-Žganec et al., 2019). However, teacher perceptions of parental investment may adversely impact a teacher's attitude toward challenging students (Thompson et al., 2017). An and Soresen (2017) found that principals' contributions could determine the level and quality of communication between parents and schools. Increasing the relationship between parents and the school can positively affect academic outcomes (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). However, barriers such as time and resource constraints, cultural differences, and a lack of familiarity with the school system exist (Hamlin & Flessa, 2018). Question 6 served to investigate the school administrators' experiences with school-based parental investment and the barriers associated with that investment.

Question 7 addressed the school administrators' experience with parental investment barriers that result in absenteeism. Cuffe et al. (2017) found that absenteeism is higher among children from single-parent families than from traditional families. However, research on absenteeism and family structure barriers is minimal (Pilgrim et al., 2015). Research has shown that, in general, school connectedness is closely linked with having better attendance and academic performance (Green et al., 2019).

Question 8 addressed the social interactions of children from non-nuclear family structures. Social interactions may include extracurricular activities, social behavior, or club involvement. Academic socialization includes the parents' faith and expectations about their child's education (An & Soreson, 2017). Parents who invest in their child's education have

higher social functioning (Garbacz et al., 2017). Hughes et al. (2016) found that participation in sports increases a child's academic competency beliefs, sense of belonging, and classroom behavior while also serving as a buffer for low socioeconomic students' normative declines. McLanahan et al. showed that students from father-absent homes are more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior (as cited in Amato et al., 2015). Culture-specific barriers to participation, if identified, can help targeted intervention efforts to overcome these barriers (Garbacz et al., 2017). Providing the school administrator with an opportunity to identify these barriers may provide insight into their targeted interventions through leadership.

Razik and Swanson (2010) posited that motivation to perform a task comes from an individual's expectations or beliefs about the effort, performance, and outcome. Questions 9 through 11 were inquiries about the participants' experiences with motivations. The four assumptions in expectancy theory are that individuals have expectations about their needs, motivations, and past experiences and, therefore, can make a conscious choice about what they want from the organization (Lunenburg, 2011). Through these questions, my intent was to understand parental investment barriers better and whether school administrators experience parental motivation as a component of parental investment through the participants' experiences.

The next set of questions were focused on leadership and the participants' experiences in leading non-nuclear families. Question 12 provided the school administrator with an opportunity to describe a situation in which they have practiced directive leadership. Directive leadership, according to the path-goal theory, is when a leader provides structure to the situation through specific expectations and insists that the standard should be met (House & Mitchell, 1975).

Students spend the majority of their day at school; therefore, it is an integral part of their

development. School culture has been shown to have positive effects on attendance and academic performance (Green et al., 2019; Nicoll, 2014; Sheldon, 2007).

The focus of Questions 13 and 14 were on school administrators' identification of parental barriers and their beliefs on how leadership can impact those obstacles. Vroom (1964) found that parents invest social capital in an organization with expectations of their needs; their behavior is a conscious choice; they differ in what they want from the organization; and they will choose the best course of action for them personally. These four aspects of the motivational theory apply to how a leader chooses their leadership style in accordance with the potential payoff for the parent (Razik & Swanson, 2010). Kalkan et al. (2020) found that school administrators work to fulfill their administrative duties while also attempting to adapt to change and renewal expectations. These questions provided the school administrators with the ability to discuss how they attempt to change and renew expectations more effectively.

Questions 15 and 16 addressed the leadership styles of supportive leadership and participative leadership. House and Mitchell (1975) described supportive leadership as a leader having a friendly relationship with and showing concern for the subordinate (defined in this study as the non-nuclear parent). House and Mitchell also contended that a supportive leader is approachable and exhibits trust. In contrast, a participative leader considers the subordinate's (i.e., the non-nuclear parent) views seriously before making a decision. One situational factor in path-goal theory is the subordinate's perceived ability to assist (Olowoselu et al., 2019). These questions provided the school administrators with the opportunity to describe a situation in which they have enacted these elements of leadership as well as to discuss whether they perceived the non-nuclear parent as capable of assisting the school.



Question 17 provided an opportunity for the participant to explain how education can better serve the student population of non-nuclear families and how they can engage parents to help students better. Question 18 ended the individual interview by prompting the participant for any critical information that they believed was relevant to the study, but not addressed in the prepared questions. This question was a verbal way of providing the participant with the freedom to express their thoughts on the topic (Elizabeth, 2008).

### **Focus Group Interview**

Focus groups can result in themes emerging from a group discussion that may not have been attained through one-on-one interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, I organized one focus group interview to collect additional data from the participants. For the focus group interview, I selected five participants to provide a diverse perspective of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. Four of the five participants attended the focus group. With the four participants who joined the focus group, data saturation was achieved. In my selection, I considered their experiences as expressed through the individual interviews and attempted to get one participant from each size school (small, medium, large). I also looked for participants who have had diverse experiences, as expressed in the individual interviews. This selection process allowed the focus group interview to be focused on the phenomena of parental investment and leadership practices from a variety of individual experiences.

For the focus group interview, I arranged a time, date, and location with input from the participants on what was the most convenient. I provided refreshments and dinner which created a welcoming environment and encouraged active discussion in the focus group. The purpose of the focus group questions (Appendix H) was to stimulate dynamic and in-depth conversation about the non-nuclear family's parental investment in schools that would lead to discovery,

exploration, direction, and depth. The session included scripted questions that were adapted after the individual interviews to gather depth on the emerging themes. I audio-recorded the structured focus group interview to ensure accuracy. The session lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes and began with an initial question to ensure all participants were familiar with each other. The following are the standardized, open-ended focus group interview questions with the central research question (CRQ) and the research subquestions (SQs) addressed in parentheses.

1. Tell us your name, how long you have worked as a school administrator, and your reasons for participating in this study.
2. Think back to your formal training and subsequent transition into your role as a school administrator. What do you feel prepared you the most for the challenges you would face? (SQ3)
3. What barriers do you see as a school administrator that parents from a non-nuclear family structure face? (SQ1)
4. How have you experienced parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families?  
(CRQ)
5. How does parental motivation impact parental investment for non-nuclear families?  
(SQ2)
6. How do you lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers? (SQ3)
7. What barriers have you experienced personally in your role that hinder your ability to assist non-nuclear families? (SQ3)
8. What would you change about the educational system to help parents from a non-nuclear family structure, and why? (CRQ)

The goal of Questions 1 and 2 was to provide an entry point for a comfortable conversation about their experiences of parental investment barriers resulting from the family structure (Moustakas, 1994). The goal of Question 3 was to investigate what barriers the non-nuclear family structure present and how schools can address these challenges (An & Sorensen, 2017; Nicoll, 2014).

The literature identified that parental investment increases academic performance and non-nuclear family structures have less parental involvement due to lack of family resources (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019). Question 4 addressed this concern by seeking how the school administrator experiences parental investment. Parental investment barriers also include parents' beliefs about investment, perception of invitation for involvement; parents' class, ethnicity, and gender; and societal factors (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Olowoselu et al. (2019) posited that leadership styles are based on motivation for addressing issues. Question 5 served to investigate how school administrators experience parental motivation regarding parental investment. Question 6 allowed the participants to share their experiences with leading non-nuclear families through investment barriers and understand their perception of the school administrators' ability to do so. School connectedness has been found to be closely linked to academic success (Green et al., 2019). However, not having both parents in a household has been found to place a child at a disadvantage (Huang et al., 2017). Question 7 addressed how school administrators experience obstacles in assisting non-nuclear families in their roles as administrators. Question 8 provided the participant with an open forum to discuss an educational utopia and gather as much of the participant experience as possible.

### **Writing Prompt**

Participant writing can be an effective method for gathering participants' beliefs and

experiences (Elizabeth, 2008). I asked study participants to respond to a writing prompt (Appendix I) after the individual interviews and focus group interviews. I emailed the writing prompt to all participants following the individual interview. This writing prompt allowed the participants to be self-reflective in their experiences and cognizant of their experiences from the interview and focus group. Through the writing prompt, I asked the participant to respond to each question with at least one paragraph, but set no limit to their writing.

Question 1 was focused on the participants' thoughts, beliefs, and views on the non-nuclear family structure and its implications on educational outcomes. Family structure is the single most significant predictor of academic achievement (Jeynes, 2005; Laursen et al., 2019; Magnuson & Berger, 2009). The non-nuclear family structure can limit the family's resources available to the child (Cavanagh & Fomby, 2019; Sun & Li, 2011). Harven (2018) and Noguera (2003) both argued that school officials find it easier to ignore poor and underrepresented parents' demands. This writing prompt question allowed the participant to address this accusation by explaining their viewpoint.

Research has shown that non-nuclear children have less favorable academic, psychosocial, and self-concept outcomes than children living in intact families (Laursen et al., 2019). Question 2 addressed how the school administrator experiences the phenomenon of parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. Question 3 allowed the participant to express their beliefs and thoughts on the topic of leadership overall without the constraints of an interview or focus group. Olowoselu et al. (2019) found that school administrators will select the leadership style most appropriate to the given situation. Elizabeth (2008) explained that allowing the participant to write about the topic freely can expose emerging beliefs that may not be expressed in a structured interview or focus group.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis allows the researcher to make sense of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, data analysis included epoché, horizontalization, a cluster of meaning, and structural and textural descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used each method in this study to develop meaning from the shared experiences of the participants and I analyzed all the data personally. I gave all participants a pseudonym, and all data were kept in a locked location.

The individual and focus group interviews were recorded using a digital handheld voice recorder. Two voice recorders were used for each interview. Any handwritten notes during the interview were also uploaded and stored digitally. To begin the data analysis, individual interviews and focus group interview data was transcribed and entered into a Microsoft Word document. The integration of the transcripts (Appendix J) into a digital format helped with data analysis and coding. Upon placing the data in a digital format, I used the NVivo software to organize and code data. I analyzed themes by looking for common phrasing and approaches to non-nuclear families. I developed textural and structural descriptions of the individual interviews, focus group interview, and written prompts from the themes that developed through analysis. All data for this study were stored electronically on a password-protected computer and on an external hard drive.

Epoché is the process of setting aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) placed a great emphasis on epoché and asserted that the researcher needs to be transparent with themselves so that they may view the phenomenon for what it naturally is. Reaching epoché, however, is not easy, as Moustakas admitted. Achieving a pure state of being with no predispositions is a lonely process that requires an unusual and sustained amount of concentration and self-revelation (Moustakas, 1994).

Creswell and Poth (2018) described epoché as bracketing out the investigator's experiences to approach the phenomenon with fresh eyes. Bracketing out of experiences, which may take several sessions, can be completed by labeling the experiences to be written out (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I achieved epoché by bracketing out my experiences and prior conceptions from the data and looking at the data with an open frame of mind.

Bracketing out my experiences allowed me to focus the study directly on the participants and their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, I am passionate about this study because I am active within the educational field. I am a classroom teacher of 11 years and have acquired my principal certification to further my administration career. My residency has been in Central Pennsylvania for my entire life, so I am familiar with the area and the culture. I was raised within a consistent family structure that consisted of my biological mother and father within the household. I am also currently raising my children in the same family structure. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that bracketing would allow me to be cognizant of my own biases so that they do not interfere with the study results. Bracketing will take place through journaling.

Horizontalization is utilized in transcendental phenomenology to highlight significant statements of the participants' lived experiences from the transcribed interviews (Moustakas, 1994). I analyzed the transcripts of the individual interviews and the focus group interview and memo significant statements. I provided all data equal value and clustered data into emerging themes using the NVivo software. Next, I grouped significant statements into broader units of information called themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I then constructed a list of significant statements that were relevant to the research question. At this point, I used NVivo to collect all

memoed significant statements (Appendix K) and cluster these statements into emerging themes. Through this process, emerging themes resulted in reoccurring codes and significant statements.

Textural descriptions are a description of what the participant experienced (Moustakas, 1994). I wrote about what school administrators experienced regarding the non-nuclear families' parental investment barriers and all possible meanings and perspectives on leadership practices. I utilized themes to develop a narrative on what was experienced by the participants and how they experienced the phenomena. This process allowed me to understand the phenomenon through the participant's experiences using the transcripts verbatim. Finally, the essence of the phenomenon was created by using the textural and structural descriptions of Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. The essence of the phenomenon was used to represent the participants' experiences as a whole from the data collected.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is the validation of a study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher's trustworthiness can be operationalized through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I integrated multiple methods, including auditing, member checking, and triangulation, to achieve trustworthiness in this study. The selected methods and justification for their selection are supported below to ensure that the study is reliable.

### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to whether the study results can be trusted based on how the research was conducted. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the triangulation of data from various sources verifies the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), various sources include

multiple participants and different data collection methods. I achieved triangulation for this study by sampling 12 different school administrators from different districts. Credibility through triangulation was also achieved by collecting data from individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing prompt.

Another way to ensure credibility is by utilizing member checks and peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks are when the researcher allows the participant to view the raw data collected and correct errors of fact or interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used member checks to ensure that participants had the opportunity to review and respond to the study's findings. This process increased the study's reliability because I presented the participants' viewpoints of the phenomenon accurately. Peer debriefing is the process of exposing the raw data and analytic session to a disinterested peer who plays the role of devil's advocate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefing involved asking two peers to view the raw data and transcripts to verify the emerging themes.

### **Dependability and Confirmability**

Dependability and confirmability can be determined by the documented and logical process of the research (Schwandt, 2007). For this study, I utilized an audit trail (Appendix L) to ensure dependability and confirmability. An audit trail results in a residue of records, including raw data, analysis products, and process notes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail allows an auditor to review the information for dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At the beginning of the study, I created a tracking document in Microsoft Word to detail the critical decisions, including, but not limited to the rationale and potential consequences for decisions made during the study. This process increased the reliability of the study because decisions made were presented for alternative interpretations.



## **Transferability**

Transferability ensures that an in-depth, rich discussion of the phenomenon occurs so that the researcher can clearly understand and report the essence of the lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I achieved transferability because I am the only researcher who conducted all of the individual interviews, led the focus group interview, and analyzed the data. Transferability is established through the presentation of proper thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using only one researcher can ensure that the data will be an accurate reflection of what the participants experienced and therefore enable a thick description of the participants' experience.

Transferability can also be achieved through a purposeful sampling method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used the purposeful sampling of key knowledgeable participants for this study. Key knowledgeable sampling enables the participant to inform the inquiry with their knowledge, experience, and expertise (Patton, 2015). I fully and richly described the participants' experiences.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The first ethical consideration was in regard to participation in the study. All participants were required to sign an informed consent form and were able to leave the study at any time. Participants were identified by a screening survey issued to each school administrative team. The results of this questionnaire were stored in a lockbox to ensure confidentiality.

The second ethical consideration was the privacy of the participants' personal information gathered through interviews and demographic information. To protect their identities, I assigned pseudonyms to the participants and the sites where the participants were employed. The transcripts from the interviews were limited in access to myself, external auditors, and peer reviewers to ensure confidentiality. I stored the transcripts on a password-

protected computer, and I stored the printed transcripts in a lockbox. I will store all data for 3 years after the study conclusion for my use in possible subsequent research. After 3 years, I will delete the data, and shred documents to ensure confidentiality.

The third ethical consideration is the potential for conflicts of interest. A power imbalance may result from interviewing individuals that I know or work with personally (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, I did not consider my home school district for the study. In addition, I excluded school districts in which I am known by the administrative team or have a preexisting relationship with the administrative team members from the study.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three included information on how I studied school administrators' experiences with parental investment barriers from non-nuclear families. The important aspects of how data were collected and analyzed as well as ethical concerns regarding my position within the research were all addressed. Moustakas (1994) explained that the themes and meanings of the participants' experiences should be exhaustively expressed. The design of this study was intended to foster a comprehensive examination of school administrators' experiences. I examined these experiences through individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing prompt to fully understand how school administrators perceive parental investment barriers from non-nuclear families and the leadership practices they perceive as most effective in addressing these barriers. There is always more to learn, but this research design provided an adequate framework for the study and added to the literature within the field so that others may continue to research this phenomenon.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of Chapter Four is to present and analyze the data gathered while exploring high school administrators' lived experiences of parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. A brief introduction of each participant establishes a relational context for the study. The participant introductions will be followed by a presentation of results delineated by the major themes and subthemes for the study. This section will also incorporate a discussion of the analysis procedures included in the study, such as coding, examining themes, and synthesizing the findings that ensue with the essence of the phenomenon. The final portion of this chapter will compare the results with the research questions as presented in previous chapters.

### **Participants**

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of 12 high school administrators as they experienced the phenomenon of parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. The high school administrators' roles varied from the principal, assistant principal, director of education, and guidance counselor to give varying perspectives from within the administrative role. All 12 participants had at least 5 years of high school experience and were serving in an administrative role. The sites are located within Central Pennsylvania. Each participant that had experienced parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families was selected through the screening document. As shown in Table 1, participants varied in their roles and experiences, which helped provide a range of perspectives to the study.

**Table 1***Participant Demographics*

Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	School	Role	Years of experience HS/Admin	Focus group participant
Donna Dunkeld	Female	Monroe HS	Guidance counselor	5/15	Yes
Tom Jennings	Male	Fillmore HS	Principal	18/3	Yes
Jasmine Russell	Female	Monroe HS	Principal	11/2	No
Walter Boyd	Male	Jackson HS	Principal	24/12	No
Don Hoffman	Male	Jackson HS	Principal	27/13	Yes
Judy Caldwell	Female	Polk HS	Principal	33/9	Yes
John Black	Male	Taylor HS	Principal	14/6	No
Floyd Carter	Male	Martin HS	Principal	15/5	No
Dave Davis	Male	Madison HS	Principal	15/7	No
Marty Daniel	Male	Adams SD	Director of education	16/6	No
Shawn Ross	Male	Tyler HS	Principal	16/7	No
Jake Yates	Male	Tyler HS	Asst. principal	14/2	No

The superintendents of the school sites requested that the interviews not take place until the summer months. I understood the request with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, end-of-year state-mandated testing, and graduation services. I wanted the participants to be able to interview without additional stressors on their time. As a result, all the participants were very engaged and respectful as they answered the interview questions. Many of the participants were very reflective in their answers, leading some to considering changing how they administrate in the future. All interviews were conducted in person, which provided the opportunity for richer observations, such as participant body language and facial expressions.

**Donna Dunkeld**

Donna Dunkeld (pseudonym), the only guidance counselor participant, had 15 years of experience in her role as a counselor. At the time of the study, Donna, a White female, was in her fifth year of being a high school counselor, previously spending 10 years as an elementary school counselor. Prior to being a school counselor, she was a kindergarten teacher for 10 years. Donna was married with three children she is raising within a nuclear family structure. Her demeanor during the interview was welcoming and caring. She was open and reflective about parental investment barriers that she had experienced through her role as the guidance counselor. She appeared to be very caring of her students and eager to help those who needed it.

**Tom Jennings**

Tom Jennings (pseudonym), a White male, was a teacher for 14 years before becoming an administrator. He started as an administrator at a small private school and then was hired as the principal at Fillmore High School. He was married and raising three young boys in a nuclear family setting. Tom had a welcoming presence to him and displayed an eager desire to share his experiences with non-nuclear families.

**Jasmine Russell**

Jasmine Russell (pseudonym), the youngest administrator in the study, was the only participant who was not originally from the area. Jasmine, a White female, came to the area on a swimming scholarship at the local university. After completing her teaching degree, she accepted a position as a high school math teacher at Monroe High School. Working her way up through the school district, she was hired as the co-principal prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and became the head principal this year. Jasmine does not have children, but she was raised in a nuclear family.

**Walter Boyd**

Walter Boyd (pseudonym), a White male, was the academic principal at Jackson High School—the high school he graduated from—and brought a unique perspective to the study because he is raising his children in a non-nuclear family setting. Since his divorce, Walter's children live with his ex-wife. In the interview, he stated, “Once I got divorced, my mindset on communicating with non-nuclear families changed.” At the time of the study, Walter had 24 years of high school experience and 12 years of administrative experience. He was one of two participants in the study with a doctorate in education. This combination of experience with the phenomenon from both the administrative and parental sides made Walter's perspective distinctive.

**Jake Yates**

Jake Yates (pseudonym), a White male, was a passionate educator who got into teaching because of his love for football. He wanted to coach football and viewed teaching as the easiest way to do that. After teaching in Adams School District, located in Pierce City, Jake accepted the position of assistant principal at Tyler High School. Tyler High School had a significantly higher socioeconomic status compared to Adams School District. Jake was open about his experiences at both schools, bringing another dimension to his experiences as an administrator.

Jake became a teenage father in his senior year of high school when his son was born. He tried to make that relationship work by marrying his son's mother, but later got divorced. He then had another child, but separated from her mother as well. At the time of the study, he had been married to his wife of 8 years. Together they have two children, and his wife has a daughter from a prior relationship. Jake's experiences raising his own children, varying in age from 25 to 2, in a non-nuclear setting provided depth to his experiences as well as to this study.

**Don Hoffman**

Don Hoffman (pseudonym), a White male, was the operational principal at Jackson High School. At the time of the study, he had been an administrator for 13 years and in high school education for 27 years. Don and his wife had a daughter and his wife had two children prior to their marriage raising them in a non-nuclear family setting. Don is the longest-serving principal in the study.

**Judy Caldwell**

Judy Caldwell (pseudonym), a White female, was one of the two participants in the study with a doctorate. At the time of the study, Judy had been in high school education for 33 years, starting as a science teacher, and an administrator for 9 years at Polk High School. Judy was very active within her profession. She had been the union president, taught at the college level, and earned her superintendent certification. Judy was married, but did not have children. Through her upbringing, she was raised by her mother and father in a nuclear household. Her parents had an Italian grocery store where she would help out. While her mother was working in the store and her father in the coal mines, Judy was looked after by her grandmother.

**John Black**

John Black (pseudonym), a White male, was the building principal at Taylor Area Junior-Senior High School. His pathway to administration started through football and wanting to coach football. This desire led him to earn a teaching degree and teach for 8 years. During that time, he earned his master's degree and principal certification and accepted a teaching position at the urban school district of McKinley Area Junior High School. Then he accepted the position at Taylor as the principal and had been there for 6 years at the time of the study.

John is married and has one daughter with his wife. From a previous relationship, his wife has two daughters of her own. John also was raised in a non-nuclear household. He grew up with his mother and had no involvement with his biological father. He considered his stepfather to be his father, calling him “Dad.” John’s understanding of the family structure and his experiences as an administrator made him a great participant in this study.

### **Floyd Carter**

With 21 years in high school education, Floyd Carter (pseudonym) spent 5 of those years as the high school principal of Lincoln High School and the past year at Martin High School. Floyd, a White male, was similar to Jake Yates in this study, in that they both started at lower socioeconomically based schools and recently had taken a position in more economically advantaged areas. Floyd referenced the difference in experiences between his two school districts, which was enlightening for the study. Married with two young daughters, Floyd raises his children in a nuclear household, with his wife being a stay-at-home mother.

### **Dave Davis**

Dave Davis (pseudonym), a White male, was the Kindergarten through 12th grade principal at Madison Area School District. Madison is a very small school district with 280 total students in the entire school district. The school district is rural and isolated from many conveniences such as cell phone service, broadband internet, or even a grocery store. As a result, Dave’s perspective was unique to the study because of his experiences within his role as principal. At the time of the study, he had been the principal at Madison for 5 years. Dave is married with children and is raising those children in a nuclear household with his wife.



**Shawn Ross**

The principal at Tyler High School was Shawn Ross (pseudonym), a White male. Shawn was born and raised in a non-nuclear family. His mother raised him by herself until his stepfather came into his life when Shawn was 10 years old. At the time of the study, Shawn had been the principal for 7 years; prior to that, he was a teacher at Tyler for 7 years. Shawn got his start teaching at Holy Spirit High School and taught there for 2 years. He is married with three children and he and his wife are raising the children in a nuclear household.

**Marty Daniel**

Marty Daniel (pseudonym), a White male, was currently the director of education at Adams School District, previously serving as the middle school principal. For the purpose of this study, high school was considered to be Grades 7-12, and Marty had 16 years of experience with students in those grades. He had been an administrator for the past 6 years in various roles, but all within the urban setting at Adams School District. Marty was well versed in school administration and was eager to share his experiences in the study. At the time of the study, he was single with no children.

**Results****Theme Development**

A transcendental phenomenological study should provide an unbiased and accurate description of the participants' lived experiences and should utilize a systematic design for data analysis (Moustakas, 1994). For this study, I used three types of data collection: individual interviews, a focus group, and a writing prompt. In each case, the data were collected, transcribed into a Word document, and then analyzed using epoché, phenomenological

reduction, and synthesis of textural and structural descriptions. Table 2 includes the top 25 codes and associated themes that resulted from the data analysis.

**Table 2**

*List of Top 25 Used Codes and Their Associated Themes*

Code	Frequency	Code Group
Adjust leadership style	106	Leadership practices
Communication barrier	79	Extra work
Ability to lead	71	Leadership practices
School's role	60	Barrier removal
Removing barriers	49	Barrier removal
Household organization	44	Feeling helpless
Parental expectations	41	Barrier removal
Grandparent age gap	41	Feeling helpless
Time barrier	36	Feeling helpless
Creating trust @ home	31	Leadership practices
Parental motivation	29	Extra work
Transportation barrier	27	Barrier removal
Survival	27	Feeling helpless
Extra support	27	Extra work
Empathy	25	Leadership practices
Teaching parents	23	Leadership practices
Connecting non-nuclear to poor SES	23	System failures
Differing values	23	System failures
Financial barrier	22	Barrier removal
Lack of communication home to school	18	System failures
Drugs alcohol	18	Feeling helpless
Balancing act	18	Extra work
Social setting expectations	15	System failures
School involvement	14	Leadership practices
Following the handbook	12	System failures

## **Major Theme 1: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Result in Extra Work for the Administrator**

The first major theme experienced through the study was the administrators being faced with extra work when addressing parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. The path-goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1974) entails the leader (administrator) clarifying a path around the obstacle which would require additional effort by the leader (administrator); therefore, finding this major theme supported the decision to use path-goal theory as a structure for this study. The subthemes that support this major theme of additional work were drawn from the participants' comments.

### ***Parental Motivations and the School's Role***

The path-goal theory consists of followers having the characteristics of a need for affiliation, preference for structure, desire for control, and self-perceived level of task ability (Northouse, 2019). Participants expressed their level of understanding of parental expectations through the study that addressed these followers' (parents) characteristics. However, those expectations were dependent on the parent's investment. The parental investment barriers that non-nuclear families faced resulted in extra work for the school administrator. Shawn Ross, the principal at Tyler High School, runs the highest socioeconomic school in the study, but still experienced these investment challenges:

I think that the . . . one of the bigger challenges would be that those folks who aren't quite as invested don't feel that same level of expectation, same level of commitment that those other parents do and those other families do. And then . . . which trickles down to the kid. And then we've got to battle to get that kid to understand how important it is.

When a parent or guardian does not have certain expectations of the child, that results in additional work for the administrator. This was also a point of frustration for all administrators in the study. Floyd Carter, the principal at Martin High School, stated, “If, if, if the parent’s not motivated enough to help the kid, that . . . that’s an extremely tough situation.” Finding ways to get parents motivated was an arduous task for most of these administrators. They expressed that most parents were only motivated by extrinsic factors. This was evident in this exchange during the focus group among the principals:

DON HOFFMAN: Yep. Yeah, and graduation’s a big motivator. So . . .

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: If there’s no contact for 4 years, it . . . suddenly that last week of school, when they receive a failure letter, parents are at the door. And it’s like, well, where have you been? . . . You know what I mean . . . for 4 years? Because that . . . that’s a big motivator.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Mm-hmm.

External motivators helped school administrators navigate parental investment barriers, but this required extra work on the part of the school. This expectation altered the school’s role, from the administrator's perspective, from a purely academic institution to a more encompassing one.

Marty Daniel is the director of education at Adams School District, which is located in Pierce City. Pierce City is an urban environment consistently in the top 10 of most depressed cities in Pennsylvania. On the idea of what is the school’s role in parental investment barriers, he stated, “Um, let’s be honest. Schools are no longer just a . . . academic institution as we, we mentioned. We are, uh, and have to become a community resource.” This point was reiterated by most

participants, with some even going further than describing “a community resource.” John Black is the principal at Taylor High School, which is located in the suburb of Pierce City. He faces some of the same parental investment challenges of non-nuclear families that Adams School District has, but John’s frustrations can be seen with the additional expectations placed upon the school:

I think there’s every service provided by, by a school district. We have to be your health trainer. We have to be your nutritionist. We have to be your chef. Um, you know, if your kid comes to school and has any kind of allergy or any kind of digestive issue, the school has to provide and has to be prepared to deal with that. So, you know, whether it’s the food you eat or physical activity, keep you in shape, or the knowledge of how to, um, you know, care for your, uh, diabetes or, or whatever type of physical uh, ailment you may have, uh, the school becomes that individual. Uh, I think students are sent to school when the parent knows that they’re ill, uh, because they know that the school is going to do something. They’re going to help out. They’re going to have, you know, someone who’s gonna look at you and, and, uh, you know, “I hurt my arm at practice.” “Yes or no, you didn’t . . . you didn’t have anything going on in practice.” “Well, my arm hurts. Can you look at it?” So now the athletic trainer is becoming a, you know, a free, uh, you know, medical evaluator. You know, they don’t practice medicine, they don’t prescribe treatments, but they do point you in the right direction, you know. And we’ve had a lot of times where, you know, they try to come back and say, “Well, he got hurt at school, or that was happening, uh, here or there.” “No. It did not. We have no incident.” So, I think the school was being asked to provide just about every service, including being a parent.

All participants experienced this demand of additional roles above academic obligations. The most rural participant in the study was Dave Davis at Madison High School. He also experienced this expectation of the school being expected to parent: “Um, they . . . there’s definitely this expectation that has crept in for the school to do a portion of the parenting.”

However, this expectation of being the academic institution as well as fulfilling all other expectations can be a difficult one to meet. Shawn Ross addressed this balancing act:

People don’t like people telling them how to do things in their own homes, you know.

And I think that’s, that’s just one of those fine lines that I, I don’t. . . . I think that we can consistently offer support and help and . . . again, I go back to the . . . when are we being the know-it-alls and intrusive on families’ lives.

With this fine line to navigate and the additional expectations placed on the school, administrators are tasked with much more than simply running an academic institution.

### ***Extra Supports and Tasks***

Some administrators in the study stated that once they know that a student is from a non-nuclear situation that has some challenges, they put supports into that child’s schedule. As a result of the extra expectations placed on schools, school administrators are tasked with finding additional supports to assist that student and family. Floyd Carter was one of those administrators:

You, you, you just do your best. So as, as far as that kid where, where, um, you know, their parents are on the wrong track and, and the grandparents are trying to do their best, you put every support possible into that schedule.

Sometimes, extra support is in the form of taking time out of the administrator’s day to listen to the child. Jake Yates described his experience with supporting a child:

But if all of those things are running in your head and the kid is staring out the window, they're, they're, you know, thinking about all the possibilities. And so many times when . . . parents are afraid to tell their kids what's going on, so. . . . And the kids make up the worst possible case scenario you could ever imagine. They imagine the, the, the worst things ever. And you call home and you're like, "Hey, this stuff is going on in this kid's head." And, um, they're like "Ahh no, it's not that, it's this." And the kid is like, "Well, I didn't know that you . . . I didn't know that." And there's a communication breakdown there. So kinda be that communication bridge for kids. And then they're like, "Oh." Like, "You're good?" "Yeah." "Go back to math class." You, you know what I mean? A-and then we can get some math work done.

Almost all of the participants in the study expressed a situation similar to the one that Jake described. Every school in the study had a social worker, which the participants described as vital to serving these non-nuclear families. Tom Jennings, the principal at Fillmore High School, talks about the social worker role in serving these families:

They expect that . . . and, and I'm not . . . they're not like demanding about it, but they expect it, which is why we have . . . pretty . . . which is why we have a full-time social worker, which is why our school counselor is bogged [down] with mental health because they are . . . we are doing it. We are helping them with the things that typically the nuclear families don't have to deal with. Very rarely does a kid from your traditional nuclear family come to our guidance office and have to talk to, to them about something personal.

This role is so crucial to the school's newly discovered role of serving non-nuclear families that Tom is weighing the social worker role over the role of a teacher:

I'm actually . . . and this is kind of a stretch, but we may have an English teacher retiring here next year. I'm actually on the fence of saying, "Let's, let's not replace with an English teacher, but let's replace with a social worker." Because there's way more work on the plate for those guys. Like I said, we have families . . . we have classes where maybe there's maybe one nuclear family or none. I mean, and even sometimes the nuclear ones are . . . they're a little toxic. So, I mean, it's like the need is there for us to save these kids in the classroom. They need someone to go to and . . . our counselor is, is swamped because she has to do that, plus standardized testing and college scholarships and all that stuff. So, I mean, her role is limited on the mental health. It's about half of her job.

The social-emotional piece of schools is an added burden that takes away from the education that needs to be provided to meet the demands of state testing and the child's academic growth. During the focus group, the principals expressed that if they had a magic wand, this would be the piece that they would remove:

JUDY CALDWELL: So . . . yeah, so if we could wave that magic wand

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah. Oh, yes. Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Is take that piece away from the schools, or support that piece

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm. Yep.

JUDY CALDWELL: In the schools, by some outside body

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm. Yep.

JUDY CALDWELL: So that we would have time

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: To do more with other kids and those kids.



TOM JENNINGS: Mm-hmm.

The child's social-emotional needs and the family result in an additional service the school has to provide. However, that is not the only additional task placed upon the school. As a result of the dissolving nuclear family, multiple contact persons are involved in that child's life. Therefore, this also provides an additional challenge for the school administrator. Jake Yates explained this phenomenon:

I, I, I think communication is probably the number one [barrier]. I, I think nuclear families, there's, there's a lot more. . . . Mom knows what's going with dad. Dad knows what's going on with mom. When there's a school event, when there's a field trip, when there's a piece of paper that needs to get turned back in and there's homework, there's communication there 'cause it's all in the same household. And, uh, wi-with non-nuclear families, um, y-you know, that communication breaks down for a variety of reasons. It might be the two households.

When that breakdown in communication takes place, it creates a barrier for the administrators to navigate. Dave Davis shared his experience:

So, in a lot of non-nuclear situations, I maybe have a very lengthy list of contacts because for whatever reason, somebody is the primary caregiver for this child . . . but wasn't naturally set to . . . to in certain cases. I'm thinking grandparents or other things. And it, it takes a village, so to speak, maybe to raise that child. Um, and then on a nuclear situation, sometimes I have the traditional. There's a mother and a father listed. There's one workplace here and one workplace here, and it's more simple. So there's definitely a communication barrier, um, more, more or less getting to that person, um, sometimes a little bit with getting a response or a motivation to get back.

This phenomenon of multiple at-home contacts was a familiar one among all participants. Walter Boyd explained that communication is vital because

If you can establish the best way to communicate, email, phone call, cellphone, work phone, um, mom, dad, grandparent, whatever it may be, so you establish what is the best way to communicate. And then, once you do that, um, I think, then, you can start working on those expectations.

The challenge that the participants found was that contact information was not being shared. Jasmine Russell, the principal at Monroe High School, wrestled with how to obtain this information from non-nuclear parents:

There is kind of that fine line between asking too many personal questions and trying to make [sure] everyone's involved. Uh, because, you know, if you know a family is separated, and . . . you can't really say to Mom like, "Well, do you want Dad to be included in this?" 'cause then that's awkward.

The "awkward" conversations can sometimes lead to significant issues. A similar experience was expressed within the focus group discussion about reaching out to parents:

DONNA DUNKELD: And there's something else too. Like, I . . . when I have a parent call, usually, as I'm on the phone with them, I'm pulling up all their information because this is the parent that I never hardly talk to, and I make sure they're on the contact before I even start, just to . . . because sometimes you don't know.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DONNA DUNKELD: Because sometimes Dad's mad at Mom and won't put her as one of the contacts.

DON HOFFMAN: Yep, yep.

DONNA DUNKELD: And so, I don't see that a whole lot, but sometimes I do, and I just have to say, "Uh, I'm gonna need you to call your . . .

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DONNA DUNKELD: . . . ex-husband and tell him he needs to put you on the contact [laughter] 'cause I can't talk to you until he does." But usually it, like, by then, it's usually pretty civil between the parents. I . . . had more of, like, the nasty stuff in elementary school with parents than I do now in high school.

TOM JENNINGS: I've found a lot of my conversations with those situations, I have to be . . . I have to say, like, "Hey, what . . . what about the kid?"

When dealing with domestic disputes such as the one described above, these situations can escalate, requiring the injunction of a court order. This requires additional effort on the administrator's part to ensure that all vested and required parties are involved with that individual student's communications. John Black stated,

Upon learning that a student comes from a non-nuclear family, I think about the potential struggles that a student may face, the possibility of legal orders that may need to be identified and/or followed, and I think about the potential data that we need to collect to ensure total family communication is enabled and followed.

Court orders add another dimension, but the school administrators must rely on parents to provide that information. There is no way to validate the information provided by the parents and the actual court rulings set forth within the current system. Walter Boyd had an experience that illustrates this frustration:

'Cause sometimes parents don't follow court orders either. Like, we found that out. Like, there'll be . . . like, there's not an issue until there's an issue. And then, all of a sudden,

it's like, "Oh, we didn't know there was a court order," or, "Do you have a court order?" or . . . like, we had a court order that wasn't even signed off by a judge. But the parents made up their . . . they made up their own mind that they were just gonna follow this [order] that had been drafted. Well, it doesn't hold any weight though. Yeah. That's not . . . like, "You have to provide me with something." So tha-that's the thing, too, is navigating that dynamic if they're . . . if they are split, what is the dynamic? Is it a good dynamic? Is it a . . . is it a negative dynamic? And then just identifying who you actually need to speak to.

The overall sentiment from all the participants was a desire to help the student and communicate with whomever is needed to achieve that goal. However, frustration mounted whenever information was not shared with the school.

Gathering the required information from parents, either on legal proceedings or basic contact information, can be a challenge. Furthermore, keeping that information up to date is another hurdle that required additional effort from the administrators and additional frustration when the information is obtained. Floyd Carter shared the same sentiment of others in the study about the onus of updating information falling onto the parent when he stated, "Communication is always a challenge. And, it's a challenge if the other part of the family doesn't do their, their part to make sure that their information is updated or their email is updated or their address is updated."

Most of the participants understood the challenges for parents of constantly updating the information at the school. Tom Jennings explained that updating the information may not be a priority:

Communication can be a big one is because you don't always know because we, we have the information in that system [points to the computer]. And if they've changed it, and they haven't told us, and there could be new addresses and new phone numbers, if they don't tell us, we don't know. So that does cause problems. And we all . . . and all we can do is encourage them, "Hey, if you make a change, let us know." But, you know, if you're moving, last thing you're thinking is to call a school and tell them my new number. You got to change your . . . all your utilities and all your bills, and all these other things. So, you know, calling the school, that's probably not too high on the list. And then of course, that makes it hard for us.

The change in addresses could be for a multitude of reasons. "You know, families change, and the dynamics change so frequently," Don Hoffman stated. Another reason for the change of address was families being transient. Floyd Carter explained the frustration of a transient non-nuclear family as well as the added dynamic of the COVID-19 pandemic:

The family who would move from, from this house to this house, and they do that every 2 months, but they won't tell the school. So we're sending letters home, and post office stops forwarding them after a . . . after a year or after a month, and then, then we get the, um, the letters back. And the only way that we got those address changed is if we called the kid in and said, "Where do you live?" I'm serious. And then it was a real son of a bitch during COVID 'cause I didn't have the kids to talk to. That was absolutely just horrendous.

The challenge of updating student contact information and ensuring that the proper guardian was informed was an issue for all participants, regardless of the school district. This communication

barrier led to more significant issues requiring even more additional work from the administrator.

Jake Yates explained this progression from a communication barrier to a more significant issue:

Trying to communicate, you know, to the other side where you might be leaving voicemails or you might be sending letters. And then all of a sudden, a big problem pops up and they're like, "Well, why didn't I know about this?" And we're like, "Well, we emailed you. We called you." You, you know? Um, we, we have a disconnected phone number, you know, that it was never updated on the last one.

Every administrator in the study explained how a solution to this barrier was challenging. Very few solutions were experienced regarding how to contact parents or how to obtain up-to-date information to do so.

All schools within the study mailed progress reports, report cards, and other important information to parents and guardians. Jasmine Russell clarified this process: "We do the offering for second mailings, like, report cards go to Mom and to Dad. Or, you know, their schedules go to Mom and to Dad, whatever important mailings go out." All schools have a similar system where duplicate mailings are available whenever the family dynamics require it. Even in these situations, though, challenges can arise for the administrator, as Judy Caldwell experienced:

Now, the one thing I had to change this year . . . a situation arose that we would send deficiencies to the first contact. We'd make sure all those went out. And then my secretary the next day or the next . . . would make copies and send out to the second pair. We had an issue with that. Actually, I had one parent use it against another. So now we make sure that everything is sent out to both parents on the same day. So we've had to do that.

Throughout the interviews, experiences like Judy's were familiar. Families would not be receiving the information through the mail, use the mailings against the other parent, or even block mailings from going to the other parent. Floyd Carter had multiple experiences in which non-nuclear parents were transient or would grow frustrated with the child:

So we'd be sending progress reports home. They'd get returned to sender. And, and then, you know, eventually when the kid was found, the parents would call in bitching. And, and they were at different address, so they never got any of the failure letters. That was a very tough situation, and those were all non-nuclear families and, uh . . . or you'd call home and, and mom would say, um, "Oh, yeah. He's a pain in the ass. He's not living with me anymore. He's with grandma."

Although these situations were demanding and required extra work, as I saw throughout the study, the administrators would find a path around the obstacle. This was consistent with the path-goal theory driving the study. One common solution was home visits. Don Hoffman conducted some home visits and even took his school resource officer (SRO) with him:

Well, we do a lot of home visits. You know, we go to the house. Uh, we have our SRO here, uh, that goes with us. We do make a lot of trips, you know, 'cause, you know, people . . . you know, you can't get through by phone or mail. We have to take a visit, so we do a lot of home visits.

While on these visits, the administrators expressed a greater understanding of the non-nuclear family dynamic. These experiences provided the administrator with a clearer picture of the obstacles facing the non-nuclear family so that they could help. According to Donna Dunkeld,

And I-I'd got to see firsthand dysfunction at its best, too, at some of these homes when we went to them because I go with the resource officer just to do check-ins because the

kid wasn't doing anything. We couldn't get ahold of parents when we were calling, and so we would just show up at the house. Um, that was a big eye-opener. And I like going to houses, and I like to know where these kids are living and see firsthand.

Another way of addressing the communication barrier was utilizing the student. Even with this dynamic, there are challenges. The student may be manipulating information to their advantage, not reliable enough to relate the information, or regulating the information for their own situation. The topic of the child being relied upon for the communication was discussed within the focus group while discussing parental contact:

JUDY CALDWELL: So, whereas, in a nuclear family, I might have the mother that's calling to say, "Hey, my kid doesn't tell me when, uh, picture day is."

DON HOFFMAN: [laughter] Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: "Can you fill me in on when picture day is?"

TOM JENNINGS: [crosstalk] That's constant. [laughter]

JUDY CALDWELL: Or, "Can you . . ." uh, you know, "What are we doing about this?" or, you know, "What about this? What about that?" Those kids do not have anybody doing that for them.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: And so, if they don't take care of it themselves, it's not taken care of. So . . .

TOM JENNINGS: And on a lighter note, you almost have to decide and try to figure out is this intentional on the kid's part or do th . . . is it?

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm. Yep, yep.



TOM JENNINGS: Do they really not know, like . . . are we . . . do we need to update our, our information system?

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Or is the kid just kinda saying, “Yeah, I got this?” At, at the high school level, it’s very hard to determine that.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: Yep. Yep.

TOM JENNINGS: But it happens, those little things happen a lot.

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: And we’re the ones that get the phone calls with the . . .

DON HOFFMAN: Yep. Yep.

TOM JENNINGS: . . .you have to hold the phone out a foot from your ear ‘cause you’re getting yelled at.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: “Sorry, we didn’t know, man.” [laughter] Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

Regardless of the path to go around the barrier of communication, all of the administrators were dedicated to finding a pathway for the child to be successful and the parents to be involved. This may have resulted in extra effort and frustrations, but the end product was to help the child.

Walter Boyd best summarized the barrier of communication:

You know, education is different than it was 30 years ago, too. So, if we said we were gonna teach the same curriculum that we did 30 years ago, that would not be acceptable.

So, if we say we're gonna communicate with families the same way we did 30 years ago, that's not acceptable either.

### ***Judicial System***

Another additional task placed upon administrators when helping non-nuclear families through parent investment barriers is having Student Attendance Improvement Plans (SAIPs). These meetings are required by the state of Pennsylvania for students who miss a specified number of days. Dave Davis stated that these meetings are common among non-nuclear families, "I'm much more prone to probably have one of those SAIP meetings with a non-nuclear family for whatever reason, the expectation of making it to school or, or actually accomplishing the mission." This additional requirement by the state requires the administrator to meet with the student and the parents or guardians to discuss and put in place a plan to increase that child's attendance. SAIP meetings require additional time and effort on behalf of the school administrator. These required meetings were met with mixed responses. Judy Caldwell had a positive experience with the meetings and found them to be a positive use of their time:

I will have to say it surprises me that when I give a specific . . . uh, we do something called a SAIP, a student attendance improvement plan. So, I have to do that before I send a kid for probation or truancy or anything like that. And at first, I thought, "This is just another . . . you know, another thing, seven-page paper I gotta complete before I have to do that. I gotta meet with the parents." But I was surprised at how something as simple as that, just a contract that we signed . . . having them come in and sign this and say, "Okay. Here's . . . now, this means that your child can't miss school, and they can't do this," that did work for some of them. So, setting that expectation with attendance, that was helpful.

This positive experience was not shared among all participants. Some viewed the required meeting as another burden that takes away from the school's role. John Black expressed this frustration during our interview:

SAIP. I, I call it SAIP. Student attendance improvement plan meetings are a waste of time. Um, I'm still the one who's doing all the work. I'm still the one who's scheduling everything. And the worst thing that's gonna happen is the student's gonna be put on juvenile probation. They're gonna have to meet the juvenile probation officer at school. They're going to have to do things at school. There's . . . nothing changes. There's no . . . there's no, um, repercussions on parents. If the parents lost money or if the parents lost time away from their job because they have to do this or they have to do that or they have to do this, um, or if the parents got fined, that is a bigger deal. That is more realistic. But as it stands now, the state's just added more and more work to the schools, more and more work to the court system, more and more work to the already-overworked, um, county workers who are going around school to school to school doing juvenile probation meetings with no ramifications.

John Black's mention of the court system was not the only instance of the school and judicial systems overlapping. Not only was working with another institution a challenge, but it also required additional time going to the court. The cross-over with the judicial system also requires additional knowledge about the different laws and courts about which school administrators are not trained. While talking about the SAIP meetings, the focus group began to discuss the frustrations with the court system:

DONNA DUNKELD: I'm gonna say, how many parents probably, in that situation, coming from families that aren't nuclear families? Like, you know what I mean? Like all those . . .

JUDY CALDWELL: All of them.

DONNA DUNKELD: Yeah. I'm gonna say, probably I . . . have we ever taken anybody to court that's . . . from a--?

TOM JENNINGS: From a nuclear family?

DONNA DUNKELD: Right. [laughter]

DON HOFFMAN: I don't recall

JUDY CALDWELL: I, I have, but it's . . . the numbers are few and far between.

DONNA DUNKELD: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: There's more so . . . now . . . yeah. But yeah. And, and like you said, there's so many rules. And they change things with the justice system too. Then they won't do this.

DONNA DUNKELD: It drives me nuts. It depends on the age.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: And then they'll do this.

DONNA DUNKELD: Like . . . uh, well

JUDY CALDWELL: Yeah, if it's 17 it's this. Don't send them to this. Send them to the juvenile court and if it's

DONNA DUNKELD: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: It's almost like the laws are set, that they don't want to deal with them

JUDY CALDWELL: I have to have . . . yeah, exactly.

JUDY CALDWELL: It's . . . at a certain age, yeah. At a certain age, nobody'll touch them.

DONNA DUNKELD: Mm-hmm. Right.

DON HOFFMAN: Right.

JUDY CALDWELL: So, once they get, like, around 17

DONNA DUNKELD: 18, yeah. You're . . . it doesn't matter.

JUDY CALDWELL: Yeah, forget it. It doesn't matter.

DONNA DUNKELD: They don't have to come to school.

JUDY CALDWELL: There's nothing that will happen to them. Um, about the only thing I've come close to is maybe taking away their driver's license.

Dealing with the judicial system is not restricted to attendance. However, it was a constant frustration expressed by the participants. Working with outside agencies, like the judicial system, requires extra time and effort on the administrator's part. If all the different agencies do not have their goals aligned, the result is a frustrating situation. The school administrators emphasized this during the focus group when discussing what they would change about the system to best serve non-nuclear families dealing with parental investment barriers:

JUDY CALDWELL: Social services, like . . . yeah.

DONNA DUNKELD: Mm-hmm. [crosstalk].

DON HOFFMAN: But you have to include social services.

JUDY CALDWELL: Yeah.

DON HOFFMAN: But there has to . . . we almost have to force them. You know, you're, you're a . . . uh, we have to put some of the onus on them. They're, they're accepting the custody.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: So, okay, you're accepting custody, which means you have to come in and learn about school. You gotta come in. You gotta make X amount of appointments. You gotta work with your social service. We're gonna connect you with a family-based counselor. Um, you're gonna come in, and you're gonna meet with . . . you're gonna l . . . you're . . . we're gonna provide workshops. But it, I mean, it all comes down to money. But coordinated efforts, I'm talking about truancy, okay, sin . . . all right. So, what's, what's the end result there? We want some parenting classes at the school. We want X amount of times where you gotta come in. You gotta meet with a counselor. You gotta meet with the principal. You gotta meet with each of your s . . . your kid's teachers . . . you know what I mean . . . over the course of, of the calendar year, a school year. Um, y-you know, things like that w . . . um, you gotta prove, eh, to the court system that you're making that effort. Because, again, it all comes on us.

Regardless of the barrier, whether navigating communication challenges, scheduling and hosting SAIP meetings, or working with the judicial system, the school administrator is expected to put forth extra effort to assist the non-nuclear family. This extra effort and support are in accordance with path-goal theory, which suggests that the leader attempts to make the path to success clear and easy (Northouse, 2019). Although the extra work falls on the administrator's shoulders, the extra effort results in a clearer route to success for the non-nuclear family.

## **Major Theme 2: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Require Certain Leadership Practices**

Non-nuclear families have barriers put in place that they need to overcome to invest in their child's education. Throughout the study, there were clear leadership practices that school

administrators implemented to lead families through those barriers. Those leadership practices may not be unique to non-nuclear families, but were consistent among participants.

### ***Building School Involvement***

When discussing parental involvement as an aspect of parental investment, extracurricular activities were a common theme. All school administrators in the study encouraged school involvement, but noticed a trend among non-nuclear families. Marty Daniel articulated this phenomenon:

Um, and then oftentimes, you see a, a correlation then as well with regards to, um, student, student involvement in, in the school. Right? H . . . um, the Key Club, the Builders Club, all the, you know, the, you know, the student activities, extracurriculars. Um, you know, the, the, the parents or the, the families that don't have that support system built in, those students struggle more to attend those or participate in, in activities. It doesn't necessarily have to be ath-ath . . . uh, athletics either. Um, you can talk about music. Um, because there's obviously a time commitment that's involved with that. You know, we . . . you get into . . . somebody has to drive some . . . the, the child to, to, to school to, you know, attend that practice, um, if it's the musical, if it's the football practice, so and and so forth.

The barriers of time and transportation are addressed in Major Themes 3 and 4, but how school administrators viewed their role in leading parents was to increase student involvement which would then force the parents to be involved as well. As Judy Caldwell explained, "And so maybe schools . . . one way we can get parents into the schools is maybe getting that kid involved in something."

When a situation would arise in which a student acted out or was identified as having an issue, building a school involvement piece was a leadership tactic used by participants. Floyd Carter shared a story of a non-nuclear family child who had a discipline issue and how he responded:

Just had an issue with . . . when, when I got here, and, um, kid was doing, doing something stupid. That part doesn't matter. The good part is after, after the, the, um, the, the, the discipline was over, you know, we got the kid in weight lifting. We got him in the different group of friends. We got him transportation that I didn't know transportation was an issue. So even that consequence can, can have, have a, um, a positive result if it's handled correctly.

### ***Relationship Building***

Getting the student involved in the school may increase parental investment, but extracurricular activities were not the answer in the case of some barriers. In those situations, establishing a strong relationship with the household was a common approach. Donna Dunkeld spoke about a situation in which a strong rapport with the family helped clear barriers:

We were really working with this one kid, and we knew that he got kicked out with his dad, and he was with mom again. And usually, mom wasn't as invested, but this time she was because he was graduating, and I think she felt comfortable with us. So having g . . . us getting a rapport with these parents is probably the most critical thing because then they, they will . . . they let us know of things that are going on, which I don't think-- if we didn't have the rapport with them, they wouldn't.

School administrators in the study had different ways to create that trust with the household, whether that be constant communication or through events like open houses and parent nights.



Regardless, all school administrators believed that the key to building a strong relationship with non-nuclear families was to stay focused on the child. Jake Yates expressed this during his interview:

We need to build those relationships with both, both parents and stay on the side of the kid. Um, you know, and . . . ‘cause parents wanna drag you into their drama at times. Especially with divorced parents, boy, i-i-if . . . yeah. I keep talking about that. It’s probably the most common non-nuclear family. But, you know, the mom wants to tell you what the dad was doing wrong with the kid. The dad wants to tell you how crazy the mom is. And to stay . . . I’m not here about that. I’m here for the kid and you need to be too.

Keeping the relationship focused on the child is what Tom Jennings experienced as the best way to communicate with non-nuclear families:

And that’s how we use the parents. “What do you need? Like, we’re here to support the kid. I don’t care if you hate your ex-wife. I don’t care if you guys are in court. What do you need at your house right now to help your kids succeed?” And when we tell them that stuff, they’re like, “Oh, oh yeah, you do care about our kid.” “Yeah. I don’t care about you. You’re, you’re supposed to be a good father, and you might be, but I got to help your kid. Your kid’s here eight hours a day, you know. I can’t help you with your personal life.”

INTERVIEWER: So, in those conversations, whenever you refocus back to the child, is that receptive?

TOM JENNINGS: That’s about as nuclear as you can make it. Whenever all of the . . . you just throw out everything and you listen. You know, we’re principals. We listen to

people vent about their scenarios. And then, you know, we're like, "Look, you know, I feel bad for you in this situation 'cause it could happen to anybody. What can we do for your kid?" That—that's, that's the ultimate question that we ask. We probably asked that question 100 times a week here, it seems like. "What can we do for your kid?" Or bring the kid in, "What can we do for you? What do you need?" Because we want that non-nuclear setting to be as little of an impact as possible when they're here, because we know it's going to be. It's just, can we reduce it a little bit? It's like shrinking the tumor. You know, the non-nuclear tumor could be huge, and it could impact everything. What can we . . . can we shrivel it down a little bit knowing it's still there, but now you can function better.

Keeping the parents or guardians focused on the child and building that relationship sometimes included teaching guardians how to parent. Floyd Carter explained a practice that he had to implement multiple times in his career to teach parents how to communicate:

When you have two parents being assholes in, in the back room, I'll, I'll, I'll put the kid out and, and, and I've been pretty successful just talking to those parents initially and, and letting down some, some ground rules for those meetings. They're not always happy, but, but it usually makes it . . . makes you through the meeting.

Floyd's experience was common among participants in teaching parents how to communicate effectively. Another leadership tactic was to remind guardians that they have the ability to be involved and make decisions. Jake Yates explained this in the context of a non-nuclear family with grandparents:

And then, you know, grandparents are . . . uh, you . . . w-when your . . . grandparents are just very different type of, you know, guardians to deal with because they're, they're way

more hesitant to act. And the . . . and they're a little bit more standoffish a, a lot of times. And sometimes I find myself giving them the confidence to be able to step in and say, "And this is the problem and you can take care of it. You have the right to take care of it." Um, so because they're not sure what they should or couldn't do and, and things like that, that happens a lot with grandparents.

Teaching guardians how to parent is a leadership role that some administrators were hesitant with how far they should go. Shawn Ross expressed, "I just don't how . . . it's harder to get this driver's license than it is to be a parent, you know? [laughter]" Some believed that the school should be involved because it affects the school day but were unsure of that line. Marty Daniel mentioned this line between appropriate and not appropriate:

Um, because again, it goes back . . . what I was saying way early on, whenever I . . . y-you mentioned about, um, parent trainings. You know, parents often forget or don't know w-what is required in order for them to be a parent. Um, so as . . . and it—it's, it's kind of almost overstepping our bounds as a school. We're, we're, we're-- we put in steps and say, "All right. So the child's gonna do this. But Mom, if the k-kid comes home with, you know, with this paper, you have to reward them. You know, give them verbal praise. Give them, you know, a Sheetz gift card. Take them . . . take them to buy a hot dog, buy a Slurpee, whatever." Right? It's, it's, it's a positive behavior support plan. It's really what we're instilling. But we have to hope after the parent meeting or after the discussion that the parent sticks with it. Oftentimes, we see that that doesn't happen. Um, but at least it's, it's discussed, then we set it up again.

However, navigating the line between whether intervention is appropriate begins with establishing the relationship between the household and the school administrator. All decisions flow from establishing that rapport.

***Perceived Ability to Lead***

Throughout the study, school administrators expressed the need for their leadership style to be flexible. Tom Jennings expressed,

We can't blame the kid for something that the parents do. So, when we find out what really happens, you know, we can be flexible enough. The kid is not just choosing. Ya know, we know that . . . we can usually find a difference between a kid who is using their non-nuclear status as a crutch versus when it's out of their control. And then when it's out of their control, we're very flexible about helping them get all the, the work that they need.

This ability to be flexible was consistent throughout the interviews with the participants. All expressed a need to be understanding that all situations are different. Walter Boyd tied this uniqueness to the world of special education and the individualized education plans (IEP):

Um, I, I think every family is unique. And this, this is kind of like educating every child. That's a unique situation as well. You know, there's, there's talk about, you know, you know, eventually, every child is gonna have their own IEP. You know, the, the, the idea of teaching to the masses works to a point for effectiveness. But then there's also a time where that is not effective anymore. So, you know, communicating with families, there are . . . there are general broad things you can do that could work for a wide range of families. But the ones you really need to get involved and help them to be invested, you have to really spend time figuring out what's . . . what works to make that happen.

One aspect of the study that was unique was the participants' perceived ability to lead non-nuclear families. When directly asked if they are prepared to lead non-nuclear families, all participants responded with yes. However, as the questioning moved forward with asking how they lead non-nuclear families, their perceived ability to do so seemed to waver.

During Dave Davis's interview, we discussed the training that school administrators must go through to achieve certification. According to Dave,

Um, your question is very telling there, though, because I do not feel like that's a big aspect of what-what's in our natural playbook. You know, if I pick up, "Okay. Here's my . . . here's what I gotta do in the next 2 years to keep my certification," this isn't gonna be a part of it and, and should be. Um, and, a-and so I don't think I am probably much different, you know, than others. And in some ways, I'm . . . I might have . . . um, I might be in a little bit of a liability because I was raised in a nuclear family and have that situation as a parent now.

The idea of personal experience playing a role in being prepared to lead the non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers was not exclusive. The participants in the study who were from non-nuclear families or were raising their children in non-nuclear families felt more prepared to lead non-nuclear families than those administrators from a nuclear household. Shawn Ross stated, "I think I'm very well-prepared. I-I'm from a non-nuclear family. Um, I understand the hardships that they go through."

While a leader cannot dictate their past family history, the leaders from nuclear families found different ways to gain the experience to lead non-nuclear families:

DONNA DUNKELD: I know, for me, there was probably nothing that I learned in the books or in a classroom that . . . uh, the most . . . my, all my experience comes from

hands-on, what is happening right then and there with the kids, with the parents, with the teachers. So basically, I can't say anything that I learned at OUP [Ohio University of Pennsylvania] helped me [laughter] with anything that was, like, concrete on how to deal with families and kids, until you're in that position and you're doing it.

TOM JENNINGS: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: I would, I would say the same thing. I mean, I had a semester course of principalship, internship, and did some portfolios. But really dealing with families, that came about much more, uh, you know, my first few years on the job, so really it was trial by fire.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah. I, I agree. I think, uh, I-I think different leadership roles helped me. Uh, I'm in coaching . . . you know, organizing, uh, assistant coaches, and, and working with families. You know, 'cause . . . y-you know how that is with coaching. Uh, I, I think that really helped me develop some skills.

The narrative that experience was the ultimate teacher was the common response among all participants. That experience can take the form of family history, coaching, or "trial by fire" within the role of administrator. None of the participants believed that their schooling or training prepared them for navigating the barriers that non-nuclear families face while trying to invest in their children.

### **Major Theme 3: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Are Expected to be Removed by the School**

Path-goal theory puts much of the onus on leaders to design and facilitate a healthy and productive relationship in order to propel the follower to success (House & Mitchell, 1974). Within path-goal theory, motivation is theorized from the perspective of expectancy theory

(Vroom, 1964). Therefore, it is important to understand parental expectations since they influence parental motivations. In this study, the school administrators all described similar experiences regarding parental expectations of the school.

### ***Parental Expectations of the School***

Parental expectations play a role in parental motivation for all families. Knowing the expectations of parents with non-nuclear families will help with understanding the experience that school administrators have with parental motivations. Walter Boyd conveyed his experiences with parental expectations of non-nuclear parents:

Some of them wanna be informed. Some of them wanna be over-informed. Some of them are calling constantly, and some of them, you can't find, ever. Um, and I will say this, that my experience has been that that wide range exists more in the non-nuclear than in the nuclear.

This wide range of expectations to be informed provides a challenge for school administrators. In order for a school administrator to help a parent through parental investment challenges, understanding where those motivations lie is important.

Jasmine Russell asserted a common theme among all participants that all parents want their child to be successful:

But I, I do think, for the most part, all of our parents, regardless of family structure, would like to see their kids be successful. Um, you know, we don't have too many . . . we don't have too many who, who are like, "Oh, whatever. I don't care what you do. Like, don't just drop out."

This was a common parental expectation of academics, but schools have become more than academic institutions. However, most participants also described experiences in which non-

nuclear families expected the school to be involved in nonacademic matters as well. John Black indicated as such:

So, I think a lot of that falls back onto the, the school districts, and I think a lot of that falls onto school staff where we're continuing to spend money and, and add staff to the school that is nonacademic related. We add counselors. We add, uh, mental health professional, school psychologist, um, additional aides that are, you know, not delivering education or academic, uh, material but are still, you know, necessary to keep these students, uh, engaged and actively participating.

These additional services that are expected from schools add an additional task to school administrators. Dave Davis expressed, "Uh, it, it becomes difficult because I think the things that are missing are often hard items for a school to fill in the blank for. Um, we can still provide a fair and equitable day"

### ***Removal of Barriers***

A "fair and equitable day" brings into question the school's role from the non-nuclear parent's perspective. The school administrators in the study expressed an expectation of parents for barriers to be removed. Some of those barriers are a result of the financial burden placed on non-nuclear families. Shawn Ross conveyed his experiences:

I believe that we do everything we can to, to pay for everything. And I know not everything is financial, but we pay for everything so that students don't have to worry about that stuff or, you know, unnecessary equipment wise. But from a, a barrier standpoint for non-nuclear families, unless they have, uh, you know, the financial trouble of getting them from Point A to Point B, um, you know, I think that that's something we



haven't really experienced a lot of. A lot of schools will have something like an activities bus where, you know, where we never needed one, um, to the best of our knowledge.

Activity buses was a recurring topic. The administrators in the study all mentioned addressing a financial burden, but transportation was an area that some school administrators struggled with.

Dave Davis shared his thoughts on why a non-nuclear family may have transportation issues:

Um, you mentioned extracurriculars, and I think that's a good point. I think . . . and I don't know whether it's just ambition and willingness or whether, you know, maybe . . . mum or dad or stepparents or grandparents have jobs or interference that do not allow . . . you know, I can't pick you up daily at 5 o'clock from basketball practice or something of that nature. So I do . . . I do sense that I see some students in those situations not participate. Even though you can see that they're athletic and, and would naturally be interested in gym class, for example.

Other school administrators in the study were lucky to offer activity buses. These buses would run after school to take students home from their activities or, if an event was happening later in the evening, take them back to the school. Marty Daniel talked about the popularity of these modes of transportation:

We have an activities bus. I know a lot of schools have activities buses. Um, ours is very full. Uh, we usually have two to three buses running, uh, depending . . . well, not usually. Depending upon the sport, right? If it's . . . if it's fall, when you have larger teams, you have fo . . . uh, football and soccer are larger. Um, that's a- obviously, you need a couple more buses. You get into, uh, winter sports with basketball. And wrestling, you need less.

He continued about the transportation barrier later on in the interview as well:

Um, it's one thing for away games, right, 'cause it's . . . again, uh, the district I work in has . . . you know, not everyone has a car. We . . . they rely . . . many of our families rely heavily on public transportation. We oftentimes do not have a fan . . . a, uh, adult fan bus. We have a children fan bus. We don't have an adult, which maybe that's something we should invest in.

Marty benefits from being located in Pierce City, where public transportation can help families who do not have a car. His experiences were unique in this aspect. The school administrators in the study that did offer transportation in the form of activity buses were all from middle to large school districts. Judy Caldwell was able to offer transportation this year because of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic:

So, some of the things that I'm thinking about because I see how important . . . how big a barrier transportation is now that I'm providing transportation. I see how big a barrier that is. I've been thinking about, what can I cut elsewhere? How can I shift money to move it towards that?

Transportation was not the only barrier that the school administrators mentioned removing.

Shawn Ross talked about some of the ways he has tried to remove the barriers:

And one of the things that we did was we started a, um, a closet that's—it's, it's a . . . an office actually. But it's . . . kind of called Rachel's Closet. We don't call it that. We're . . . we don't really have a name for it, but kids that need stuff can go and take whatever they want. There is more clothes and toiletries and anything that they could possibly need to get themselves through anything. Um, our school social worker started the Backpack Project with Franklin County here, so we're sending kids home [with] food.

All school administrators in the study talked about offering devices, internet, and waiving fees as ways that they have tried to help remove the barriers for non-nuclear families. This is in line with path-goal theory, which suggests that the leader tries to remove the barriers to the goal. By removing these barriers, the school administrators are able to make the pathway to parental investment easier for non-nuclear families.

Unfortunately, some of the school administrators were able to do this with the additional money that schools received because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This created some worry during the focus group, which resulted in a percipient exchange:

TOM JENNINGS: So, it's, it's . . . uh, this is . . . the money thing becomes a big factor now, because once all the ESSER are gone, and, you know

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: "What about the tutoring?" [speaking as a parent] We can't do it, you know.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Right, transportation.

TOM JENNINGS: W-yeah. [crosstalk]

JUDY CALDWELL: If it's not there, they're not coming. Now, feeding them . . .

DON HOFFMAN: That's the most expensive thing, yeah, the food, the food, yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Right, the transportation or, yeah, you know, feeding them.

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Although the ESSER's fund was through the CARES Act, which was not renewed, free lunches were renewed for the 2021–2022 school year.

## **Major Theme 4: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Leave**

### **Administrators Feeling Helpless**

A major component in path-goal theory is the follower's desire to feel efficacious (House & Mitchell, 1974). When a follower (the parent or family unit in this study) feels like they can accomplish what they set out to do, then the leader (the administrator in this study) can help clear the pathway for that success. Despite that, throughout the study, administrators expressed a feeling of helplessness. Some situations were beyond the administrators' control or were aspects that the non-nuclear family unit believed they could not overcome. One aspect of helplessness that was expressed throughout was drug and alcohol use by parents.

### ***Social-Emotional Burden***

All of the schools in the study are located within Franklin County. Franklin County has a drug issue, with it recently being named one of the worse counties in the nation for its Oxycontin epidemic. All of the participants expressed the presence of drug and alcohol problems with some of the non-nuclear families that they encountered. Don Hoffman expressed frustration with the drug epidemic among non-nuclear families in his district at one point during his interview:

And, and it's like, holy cow, look at our demographics, you know? But that's just the way of the world, you know, inconsistency, people not working and, and, you know, drugs. I hate to say that, but drug use . . . I mean, it sky . . . it skyrocketed. It's a depressed area. And, and tha—that's a—that's a priority, you know. You look around, and you still see Trump signs. You know what I mean? C'mon, man. [laughter] And I hate to say that because I don't talk politics, but the mentality, the train of thought is, you know, fight the system sometimes, and I don't—that's hard to beat. That's hard to beat.

The drug use in the area creates additional challenges for the school administrators that are difficult to overcome.

As a result of drug use, school administrators are faced with dealing with the social-emotional aspect of the child. Judy Caldwell shared a story of a situation she experienced while trying to discipline a student:

And, I mean, one day I had a student . . . you know, she was sitting here in my office, and I remember her saying, “I don’t know if my mother’s alive or dead. Can you find out if my mother’s alive? Uh, she overdosed last night, and they took her away in the ambulance.” So I call the chief up, and I say, “Can you find out for me if this child’s mother is alive or dead?” You know, so yeah, he did, you know. He found out. So, you know, our community and our culture . . . there's a high drug overdose incidence here.

Franklin County is one of the worst.

The high prevalence of drug use in the area results in additional resources needed for children to be successful. As a result of drugs, some families experience significant trauma. Dave Davis talked about one family situation affected by drugs, “I can think of . . . uh, two kids that most recently I’ve, I’ve been concerned about that lost both parents d-due to deaths. Um, there was . . . there were drug interactions and, and reasons why, but it’s . . . there’s been a lot of trauma.”

Within the path-goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1975), motivation and the expectancy of being successful are key in order for the leader to help. Drug use and trauma experienced either by the student or the parent can alter the parental motivation. When these situations were discussed in the study, the administrators described being at a loss for what to do. Judy Caldwell shared a story of a situation that, as a result of trauma, limited parental investment:

I'm thinking of another family, uh, a girl that's being raised by her grandparent. And there's been a lot of trauma in that family. And the grandmother is not emotionally stable. Therefore, I can't get this girl to come to school. So, this grandmother, you know . . . and she'll . . . she would come in when at least I could get her grandmother into the school. She would say, "I'm too old for this. I'm tired. I'm done." And you know what? She's probably right. She probably is tired. She's probably . . . you know. Uh, but yet she won't . . . you know, she might be involved, but she's not invested.

Most of the schools in the study had a licensed social worker who would meet with students, but those services were being overwhelmed as well. Some administrators also expressed frustration with the limited resources available to help students with trauma or drug use in the household. The following exchange occurred during the focus group while discussing the investment of parents with non-nuclear families:

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah, but there . . . but there's no, there's nowhere to send kids.

There's nothing in this county. I mean . . .

DONNA DUNKELD: No.

DON HOFFMAN: [crosstalk]. No.

JUDY CALDWELL: No, nothing for juveniles. I have . . .

DON HOFFMAN: Nothing at all, it's terrible.

JUDY CALDWELL: I have one that went through the SAP [Student Assistance Program] process. She is definitely addicted to drugs. Uh, Mom is willing to place her because she really needs help. Um, the problem is there's nowhere to put them . . .

TOM JENNINGS: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: These ado . . .she's a female, adolescent female, you know, it's not a behavior. It's not a detention home thing. It's a, you know . . .

DONNA DUNKELD: Substance.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Substance abuse. They can't find a place to put her.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: So yeah, it's tough.

DONNA DUNKELD: I'm gonna say, we have the . . .if . . .we probably have, if you go into any classroom, 50% of the kids in the classroom probably come from this kind of families.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah.

With limited outside resources and an overwhelmed social worker and guidance counselor inside the school, the administrator is limited in their ability to help that child and that family. John Black summarized what most administrators expressed in their one-on-one interviews about the challenges with social-emotional support:

I just think that it's . . .everything's laid on the school. Everything's laid on the school administration, on the teachers, on the counselors, the mental health professionals, and there's nothing that says that the parent has to do a blessed thing.

### ***Addressing the Time Barrier***

Time was a consistent barrier to parental investment among non-nuclear families. To foster that investment, the school administrator needs time to meet with the parent, or the parent

needs time at home with the child to invest in homework, extra-curricular, or school social events. In the interaction above, Floyd Carter expressed the challenges non-nuclear families face with the time barrier:

FLOYD CARTER: If, if the parent doesn't give a shit, it's pretty tough.

INTERVIEWER: Are those situations more common or about the same in a non-nuclear?

FLOYD CARTER: I, I would say that they're more common in a non-nuclear family just because it appears, in my experience, that, that the resources available, uh, in . . . a lot of the time, in, in a non-nuclear household is, is, is, is they don't have those two parents at home, and there are so many advantages to having two parents at home. And when you have one parent at home, and you're working second shift or you're working two jobs just to make ends meet, it's, it's, it's . . . you just don't have, have the extra time to invest.

Floyd Carter's perception of the non-nuclear family time barrier was not limited to himself. All school administrators in the study expressed frustration with the limited or lack of time non-nuclear parents had to invest in their child. Jasmine Russell found reaching these parents was a barrier to helping getting them invested:

They seemed to think that they don't have time for school or meetings or homework or. . . . You know, again, those kids are, are tending to watch younger siblings if those are a thing or, "I don't have time to be supervising my kid." Um, those are the parents if we call or reach out, we're least likely to get a response from.

Most administrators in the study talked about the time barrier from the perspective of the adult in the household having to work to provide for the family. However, in split families where the child is required to go back and forth between the parents, a time barrier exists as well. This time



barrier is one that, again, the school administrator is limited in addressing. The common leadership practice in these situations was to preach flexibility as Tom Jennings expressed:

Well, time is a big issue because you have kids go in multiple directions, multiple activities. Um, we found that those children typically do need more time to complete their assignments. They typically are turning things in late or not at all. And we're typically chasing them around. "I left it at dad's. I left it at mom. Mom didn't tell dad." So, the time there is like, you know, I'm, I'm . . . I can . . . I'm working on this project in my dad's, but I have to go to my mom's, and, and he has internet, and she doesn't. So, it just . . . it's . . . time has caused them not to be able to complete work in the same function that the, the nuclear family would.

### ***Non-Nuclear Household Structure***

One ongoing aspect of non-nuclear families is the inconsistency of the household structure. By the nature of being non-nuclear, the household construct can be any combination but one in which the biological mother and father are both present within the same house. Dave Davis described the non-nuclear household: "It's just more dynamic and frazzled. It's, it's a more frazzled organization in the non-nuclear because of more things to distract." In the households with a frazzled organization, parental investment was difficult to find.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all the administrators in the study made home visits to students. When prompted, participants experienced the household structure for non-nuclear families as dysfunctional, chaotic, and inconsistent. Donna Dunkeld talked about her experiences visiting non-nuclear households:

And I-I'd got to see firsthand dysfunction at its best, too, at some of these homes when we went to them because I go with the resource officer just to do check-ins because the

kid wasn't doing anything. We couldn't get ahold of parents when we were calling, and so we would just show up at the house. Um, that was a big eye-opener. And I like going to houses, and I like to know where these kids are living and see firsthand.

Many of the administrators expressed gratitude for the ability to visit the households because it gave them perspective on what the child was living in. Nevertheless, no administrator presented a solution on how to lead families out of the dysfunctional household. Don Hoffman expressed the helpless feeling that all administrators felt when faced with the dysfunction of a non-nuclear household:

It's no wonder we can't help them. It's chaos. It's, it's . . . that complete lack of structure and organization. So the, the organizational unit of that household is, you know, you have multigenerations, um, could be non-parents obviously. Um, you have guardians. You have multiple kids in and out at various ages. Um, it-it's a free for all. I hate to say that, but that's kind of common. That's a common trend.

The multigenerations that Don mentioned were well known among participants. A shared experience that participants had was interacting with the grandparents of the child.

Grandparents provide a different household structure than the nuclear family. The administrators in the study all believed that grandparents raising children was the most challenging of all the non-nuclear family structures. Floyd Carter described his experiences with grandparents, starting with his unpreparedness for that family dynamic:

So one, one of things th-that, that I maybe wasn't as prepared for as I . . . as I should've been coming in as administrator was, was those, those parents that were just absolutely out of the picture and, and grandpap and grandma were trying to, to raise them, or a lot of times you see just grandma trying to raise them. So in . . . th-the-there's a reason that

parents are relatively young. And, and, and when the grandparents are, are trying to, to, to raise the kids, that's, that's pretty tough. Not only do they . . . n-not only do they not have the time, but, but they really don't have the knowledge base to, to really help them, so that's where the school has to come in and kinda step up.

The combination of a grandparent household, the trauma associated with why that household is now run by grandparents, and the age difference between the child and the grandparent are all aspects that can be a challenge for the administrator when working to get the grandparent to invest.

Judy Caldwell shared a story in which a grandmother was taking care of the children because of trauma in the family. She stated that the grandmother expressed that she was too old for raising a child. In that same interaction, Judy shared about the grandmother's investment with the granddaughter that she was raising:

She is not invested in what is best for her. You know, she's worried that, you know, oh, she's gonna kill herself or she's going to commit suicide because Mom did that. So instead of making sure that she's getting the help she needs, Grandma just . . . you know, "Well, we're just not gonna push this. We're not gonna . . . you know, we're not gonna make her do anything that she doesn't wanna do," which doesn't . . . is not what's best . . . for her, but Grandma's probably 76 years old. So that's tough.

Grandparent households are tough, as Judy described, but all non-nuclear family households present their own challenges. So much so that John Black believed that the perfect school system was one that would eradicate the household dynamic altogether:

I said the best school district in Pennsylvania would be the one where you have a campus where the students stay with you from kindergarten to graduation, and the parents can

come check them out for visits. But other than that, they're gonna be the best behaved, the best academically achieving, the best physically fit, most nutritionally sound. You know, obviously, with mental health and physical ailments, you can't do anything with that, but, uh, if, if we keep the kids at school, we're going to give them everything that they need, and it's going to be the best that probably would be offered. So that would be the best school districts in Pennsylvania, in my opinion, but that's not realistic at all.

A similar sentiment was shared in the focus group:

DON HOFFMAN: And then they're right back into their, their cli . . . their, their atmosphere, which, everything that . . . all the work we've done, I just feel that's where we're losing them. All the work we do on a daily basis, they go home, and it's just mass chaos. You mentioned that before.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: It's mass chaos. And, "F this. F that. F you." You know what I mean? That's how . . . and then we're supposed to right the ship when they come in the next morning, when they didn't sleep.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: They didn't eat. They fought with everybody. It's a never-ending cycle. And unfortunately, that's common. Th . . . you know, so if I had a wand, that's what I would do. I mean, may-maybe it's year-round schooling. Maybe it's . . . you know, that would help.

JUDY CALDWELL: Of some form or another [laughter] yeah, uh, some form or another. Yeah.

Besides completely removing the family dynamic or increasing the student's time under the school control, the school administrator is limited in their ability to help the family dynamic. This left most administrators in the study feeling helpless and at a loss on how to lead the family.

### ***Non-Nuclear Generational Cycle***

The school administrators portrayed the non-nuclear family as being a cycle. Some data show that this may be the case with the ever-increasing divorce rate and children born out of wedlock on the rise. Regardless, Donna Dunkeld shared a family dynamic that she experienced in which she wondered if the student would fall within the same cycle:

And I think it has to do with how, like, these kids, like, when they're growing up, how they see things with their parents 'cause, I mean, I'm thinking of this . . . these two girls that their dad remarried; mom's gone through seven boyfriends, but they live here with mom. Like, you know what I mean? And on the weekends, they go with dad, but it's more like they stay with mom because they don't want mom to get mad. But mom doesn't have a good income. Like, that, like . . . so, I don't know, it's tough. And, like, this girl, she's had a boyfriend . . . all through high school. Like, you know what I mean? That family's all in tax [*sic*; intact]. So I do feel that she will be successful. I hope she doesn't . . . like, you know what I mean? Like, in the back of her head, though . . . and, I mean, we can't tell this . . . like, she will end up like mom. Like, you know what I mean?

This cycle of non-nuclear families is another in which the school is limited in its capacity to help with or even if they should help with. Most administrators viewed this cycle as a problem and tied the non-nuclear family structure to low-income households. Don Hoffman shared how it was a challenge for him to help students from non-nuclear households because of these barriers:

And so these kids are . . . they're tough to . . . you know, you're not only . . . you're working on, on behaviors and underlying things there, but you have . . . you have some poverty. You have, um, you know, the lack of education. And their . . . their whole goal is survival. And, you know, there's phone call after phone call has to do with something other than academics. And that's, that's a . . . that's a big-time challenge. And it just seems like it's a cycle and a . . . and a whirlpool those kids can't get out of.

Associating the non-nuclear family with low-income families was not unique to Don. Jake Yates, who is the assistant principal at the highest socioeconomic-based school in the study and the area expressed:

A-and then they're, um, just trying to . . . some-sometimes, especially non-nuclear families, you, you get kind of survival parents. You know, they're, they're working two or three jobs, minimum wage or just a little bit above. You know, and they're just trying to pay rent, put food on the table.

Schools are limited in their capacity to help families with financial burdens they may be faced with and schools cannot address the family structure the child has or the household from which the child comes. In these situations, school administrators are limited in building parental investment.

These limitations do not mean that all non-nuclear families are destined not to have parental investment. Jasmine Russell shared in her writing prompt that some families invest in their child so that the child does not experience the same cycle that the parents are living in:

Some non-nuclear families have little investment in their child's education because they are more concerned about providing for their family while others may be "over-

invested”—making incredible demands on their student—so that they are not repeating the same cycle that their parent find themselves living.

### **Major Theme 5: Parental Investment Barriers for Non-Nuclear Families Expose System Failures**

Expectancy theory asserts that an individual makes a decision based on three characteristics: valence, instrumentality, and expectancy (Vroom, 1964). The school administrators in the study all mentioned systems that are in place to help the school administrator assist non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers. This perceived value in the systems would be valence. Yet, there were systematic failures when the school administrators spoke about these systems, resulting in a loss of belief that the effort exerted would result in positive outcomes (instrumentality) and the probability that the effort put forth in the systems would even result in better performance (expectancy). The first breakdown of systematic interventions was the school system itself.

#### ***School System***

Every administrator in the study spoke of a handbook that they would follow throughout the course of their day. This set of expectations or rules determined how the administrator should react in the event of an attendance issue, discipline issue, and a variety of other administrative tasks. This handbook was then sent to parents during the first week of school to inform them of all the school’s expectations and rules for the school year. This practice, however, was viewed as an outdated way of communicating with parents. Marty Daniel talked about this common practice among districts:

But I can tell you now, after doing it for a number of years, the in . . . you know, I kind of alluded to it before. You, you don’t throw a handbook at them. You don’t throw a, um,

seminar in the cafeteria or in the auditorium at them and say, “Hey, everybody. Here’s a flyer. Show up to our seminar.” No. Like, at least where I’m at, it doesn’t work.

Other administrators shared this sentiment about the failure of communicating the schools’ expectations from the start of the year. Most schools required parents to sign a piece of paper stating that they read and understood the expectations. Walter Boyd expressed frustration with this practice: “Probably most of my parents never read the student handbook. But they’re signing, saying they do.” This practice was also problematic for split households where one parent may receive the information, and the other does not.

Administrators had a variety of ways to address this common communication failure. Donna Dunkled and Jasmine Russell constructed a newsletter to be sent home twice a year with information. Jasmine spoke about the process as truncating information, “Sending out just, like . . . you know, instead of the 40 pages from the handbook, sending out, ‘Okay, here’s what you need to know about truancy.’ Like, in a paragraph.” Marty Daniels provides information in small pieces to parents at social events, “We have to do little hooks of, ‘Hey, come on in for your child’s recital or your child’s, um, ensemble practice, chor-chorus concert. And while you’re here, I’m gonna give you this flyer, and I’m gonna talk for 3 minutes about this opportunity that exists.’” These tactics of disseminating information were inconsistent among the different schools, but common in their approach to informing parents. Tom Jennings believed that these forms of communication differed for a reason:

Every situation is different, and you have to take it that way. You can’t . . . uh, you know, we have these handbooks, and we have these curriculum guides, and we have our PowerSchool, and we have all these things that’s set up. Basically, they’re set up for the



traditional nuclear family. But then within that, the dynamics can be so different that we, we truly look at every situation as different.

Although every situation is different, the school administrators were expected to handle student discipline the same way. This is where the participants in the study differed.

Some, like Floyd Carter, believed that family background should not matter in how the administrator handles a situation, “You make sure your handbook is crystal clear, um, and you make sure that you treat everybody the same and your expectations are the same across the board. And really, if you do that, you know, 90% of the parents are, are okay.” However, a majority of the participants did not fall into this directive leadership category. Most used had a supportive leadership approach and viewed the handbook as more of a guideline than a steadfast law.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah, like, this is now a norm. And that's why I think flexibility's n . . . a big, a big, big thing here. Because if you go back to the old rigid handbook, you'll die.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah, no one'll make it.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: You'd . . . no, nobody.

DON HOFFMAN: Uh-huh.

TOM JENNINGS: Not even the nuclear kids. [laughter]

DON HOFFMAN: No.

JUDY CALDWELL: No. Right.

TOM JENNINGS: 'Cause they're so accustomed to everything being the way it is now too.

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: And, you know, and we just want kids to succeed.

The handbook can create hardships for an administrator within the structure of the school system. A systematic approach implies that every situation is handled the same. As a result, some administrators experienced difficulty when they tried to put a humanistic touch on their leadership style. Dave Davis spoke about his struggle in this aspect:

Um, and I struggle with that because on the surface, that doesn't sound fair. Um, I have a handbook, and I have an objective set of rules, um, but I believe in my heart. And I'm an administrator because I want to do things the right way on given cases that come up, and I really don't believe everything's black and white. So, um, whether it's right or not, for sure, I take into consideration what the student's going through, what the situation is.

How can I really do something with a decision I make that will help not just do what the, the rule book says that, that I'm supposed to do here?

This leadership approach was viewed by most participants as the most effective, which meant that the handbook, and thus the systematic approach to school administration, was not the most effective approach:

TOM JENNINGS: That's all we do for a living is put a human touch on things.

DON HOFFMAN: That's the difference bet . . .

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: But that's the difference maker for everything, yeah.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah.

JUDY CALDWELL: Right.

TOM JENNINGS: If you're, if you're going by the catalogue . . .

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Or by any kind of . . . you're gonna fail.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah [crosstalk].

TOM JENNINGS: Every situation's different.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah.

The aspect of transient students was a consistent barrier for school administrators in leading non-nuclear parents through parental investment barriers. The systematic failure in transient students was the lack of consistency between schools and households. Don Hoffman addressed this barrier:

Well, the film . . . familiarity is that because they're tran . . . so transient. You know, they're juggling the variety of schools. Um, every school is so different. You know, once they get used to something, they're pulled out, and they're going to another school. So just trying to learn the process, um, that has to be the most challenging thing I see for parents when they . . . or, or the guardians.

The issue of transient students was common among non-nuclear households. Marty Daniel discussed why it is more commonplace in non-nuclear families:

75% of them are non-nuclear, uh, bec . . . and there's a lot of reasons why to that, right? I-it . . . if you're transient that much, it's a l . . . very challenging to have two people find a new job. Um, but it's not that challenging for one person to find . . . it's still challenging, but it's not as, right . . . to have one person find a new job or, or to relocate. Um, again, we have some that their, their father might be in Philadelphia, the mother might be here. So, the child just goes . . . bounce back and forth.

### *Court System*

In the event of severely truant students, the school will take the family to court. This process takes place as part of the SAIP agreement between the school and the family, mandated by the state of Pennsylvania. The school administrators viewed the court as the enforcing agent behind the SAIP agreement. However, failures in the court system resulted in frustrations for the school administrators. Judy Caldwell shared an experience she had with a family and probation:

I-I-I'm thinking of another family now, um, brother and sister. Um, they live with Dad, and Dad . . . they lived with Grandma. Gra . . . was Grandma's place. I think Dad has it now. Um, Dad just does odd jobs. Dad says he's working but doesn't really work. Um, you know, when I talked to the sister, she's like, "Yeah, my dad says he's gonna do some work, but he's not." So Grandma I think is the one that kinda held the family together. Grandma passed away. So now there's this dad. Now, the two kids I have under truancy, um, through probation. Probation can't even . . . we can't, can't get the kids to come to school. We cannot, you know.

A similar frustration on the failure of the court system was expressed during the focus group. Tom Jennings was discussing his frustration with the local magistrate on not enforcing student attendance, and Don Hoffman, who was at Tom Jennings's school prior to his current appointment, shared in his frustrations:

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah. I think one of the biggest set-backs that schools have is how the, the laws are set up for a lot of these types of things, where we are powerless, and we're depending on a magistrate who may just say, "Nah."

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: And then, when that happens, you, you've lost. I mean . . .

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah. And then the kids know it.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: The kids and the families know it.

TOM JENNINGS: That's our biggest truancy issue right now is how many go to . . . in front of the magistrate, and they know.

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: "Oh, she's just gonna extend my, you know, juvenile thing."

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Or, eh, nothing, or she'll just say, "No, w-we'll d . . . if this, if this keeps happening, we'll, we'll . . . I'm gonna throw the book at you next time." The book's never been thrown.

DON HOFFMAN: You have the same. I dealt with her for years. I couldn't get anywhere.

TOM JENNINGS: Nowhere, she'll go in there and yell and c . . .

DON HOFFMAN: Oh.

TOM JENNINGS: And talk a great Judge Judy game.

DON HOFFMAN: And "Don't I know your bro . . . I know your uncle."

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah.

DON HOFFMAN: "I know your uncle!"

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah.

DON HOFFMAN: Okay [rolls eyes in reference to his "I know your uncle" quote].

TOM JENNINGS: And it's . . . you know . . .

DON HOFFMAN: I've been down that road.

TOM JENNINGS: The verbal threats, and it's like, look, I just want the kid to come to school.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Like, I don't care if you really wanna be Judge Judy or not. And I get it. I don't want to fine a parent for something the kid does. Like, I get that. But l-let's get . . . let's . . . let's go . . .

Jake Yates found other ways to motivate non-nuclear parents to have the child attend school even though the court system will not enforce school attendance after the age of 17:

You know, uh, wh-when you, you know, you're talking about . . . and like I said, I, I deal with attendance so I deal with a lot of truancy. And to get social security money as a minor, you gotta be attending full . . . school full-time. So, a lot of times the motivation to help get kids to . . . what they need . . . and, I mean, I was just talking to a family last week and, um, the girl is . . . she'll turn 19 doing next school year. She's 18 now. Um, so truancy's not an option. But sh . . . their family is dependent on her social security check. So if she sh . . . you know, the girl wants to drop out, but the mom won't let her drop out because they won't get the check. Um, so motivations come from all kinds of different places, you know?

### ***Family System***

The final systematic failure that school administrators discussed was the family system. Although there were undertones of frustration of the family system not being structured as a nuclear family, the main concern was the lack of communication from the household to the school. In describing their experiences, all participants expressed a belief that they could help

families overcome parent investment barriers if the family would communicate their needs to the school. Jasmine Russell expressed this when referencing what she would like to tell non-nuclear parents: “We can’t fix the problem if we don’t know the problem exists.”

Shawn Ross explained that this was the hardest part of his job because he cannot address problems if he does not know they exist:

I, I, I think that the hardest part for administrators . . . and I don’t think there’s a cure for this . . . is, is the lack of knowledge that people aren’t willing to be forthcoming a-about. You know, you can, you can do what you want and have programs in place and everything, but when people don’t want to tell you things and people don’t want to sign up for programs and people don’t wanna do those things, that’s really difficult for us to know.

The school may not even know that the child is from a non-nuclear family. As Walter Boyd explained, sometimes finding out that a family is non-nuclear, “It’s accidental. Like, we find out about it, you know . . . ‘cause a lot of times . . . I, I think, when you’re in education, you make the assumption that people should be telling you what they need to tell you.” A school administrator may call a home and find out that the family is non-nuclear, or a parent calls in to complain that they did not receive a second mailing. All these situations were common among participants.

If a family does need help, the school administrator was eager to help. Marty Daniel stated, “If you need support, then you need to ask for help . . . when you know that you’re struggling, ask for help.” Despite this eagerness to help, if the communication bridge between the household and the school is only one way, the communication system is broken. During the

focus group, the administrators discussed the support they can provide if that communication bridge is active:

TOM JENNINGS: I like to tell parents that we can only work with the information that we have.

DON HOFFMAN: Yep.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: And so, if you're telling me the truth, we can work with that. If you're telling me a lie or you're stretching or you're hiding, we can only work with what we have. But we will work with it. And it's really all we can do. I mean, I, I'm, I'm new at this, but I feel like at, at the depths of and the roots of everything, we're just trying to help. So give me information, man.

JUDY CALDWELL: Yeah. And whether that's bringing in outside agencies, whether that's referral to guidance . . .

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: . . . you know, we just, we kinda have to have all of our tools from our tool box and try to use as many of those to assist them.

If that communication occurs, all participants expressed using their "tool box" of resources to help families. During the focus group, Tom Jennings made an interesting point with which the other participants agreed: "There is no non-nuclear handbag for principals and counselors." The administrators expressed a desire for the non-nuclear family to be open about information so they can assist with their toolbox but, in the same discussion, expressed that there was no "handbag" for assistance.



## **Research Question Responses**

Data collected from the individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a written prompt sent to all participants were used to answer the CRQ and three SQs for the study. In addition, the identified themes and subthemes were also applied to answer the CRQ and the SQs. The themes also provide a nuanced and complete picture of the experienced phenomenon. The answers to the research questions are explained in this section.

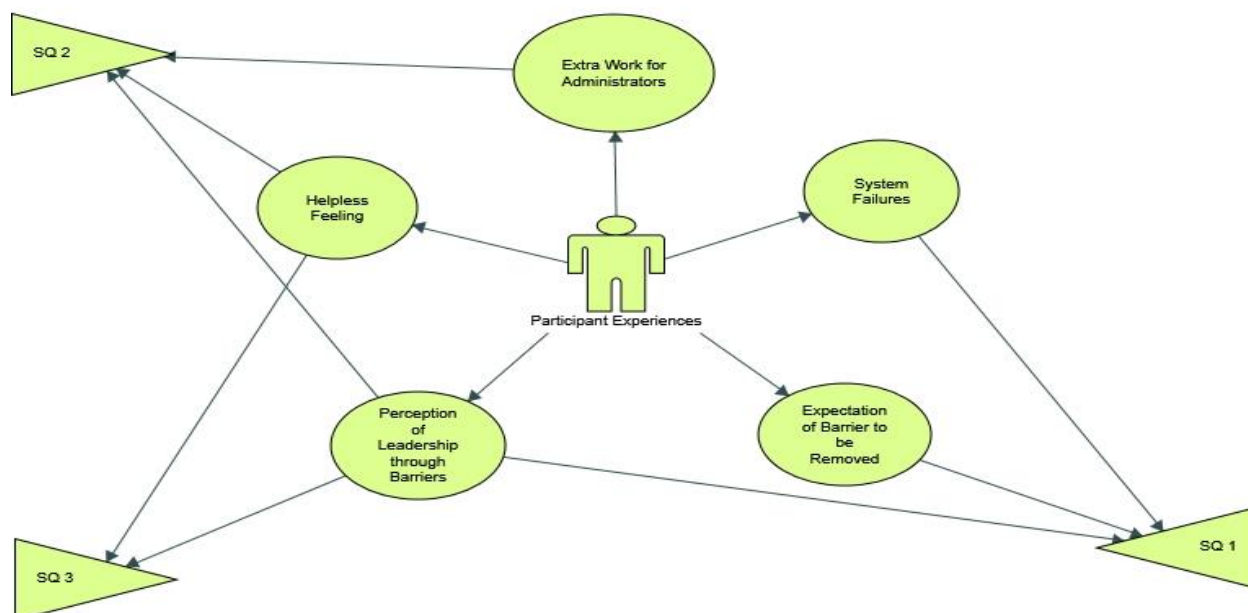
### **The CRQ**

The central research question for this study was, “What is the essence of Central Pennsylvania school administrators’ shared lived experiences regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families?” To answer this central question, I gathered rich data and thick descriptions regarding school administrators’ experiences with parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. All 12 participants expressed forms of frustration regarding their experiences. Jasmine Russell expressed this feeling when navigating parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families:

Um, it’s frustrating. It definitely is frustrating. Because, you know, you want to send them out of here happy and, and you want to have a good game plan to get the kids to school. To get their education. It doesn’t always work that way.

### **Research SQs**

The research SQs were developed to help further understand the lived experiences of high school administrators with parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. To best understand the experiences of the participants in regard to the CRQ, a consideration of the subquestions is required. Figure 1 shows how the SQs are related to the major themes discussed above.

**Figure 1***Major Themes Mapped to Research Questions****Research SQ1***

SQ1 was, “What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators’ perceptions regarding the impact of parental investment on expectations for non-nuclear families in social settings?”

This SQ was addressed by an amalgamation of Major Themes 2, 3, and 5. Research has shown that prevalent barriers to parental involvement include lack of time and conflicts with work schedules (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Brock & Edmunds, 2010; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Lack of time was a barrier mentioned throughout the study. John Black summarized this barrier by saying, “Um, sometimes parents have no time to sit down and meet, so they want to come in early, they want to stay late, and they . . . you know, Zoom helped fix a lot of that.”

John’s sentiment that Zoom, a video conferencing program, would address the barrier is an example of how administrators are expected to remove the barriers put in place by the non-

nuclear family structure. Several participants spoke about staying after hours or meeting with parents on Saturdays to address parental investment barriers. This expectation of removing the barriers that are in place of non-nuclear families is not limited to time. Participants spoke about transportation, mental health, and financial barriers, to name a few barriers that schools were expected to eradicate. Judy Caldwell summarized the expectations of eradication of barriers:

So I, I truly do think that quite a few of them expect . . . they really need the school to be as encompassing as possible in helping them raise that child. So they want the school to do as much as possible, if not more, to make sure that this kid is successful because they don't have either the stability, they don't have the stamina, they don't have whatever, you know, to have this . . . um, for that student to be successful. And I . . . and I truly do believe, even in these non-nuclear families, they want their children . . . they want the kids to succeed. They really do.

Situational factors affect a leader's behavior and influence their decision-making (House & Mitchell, 1975). In the instance of parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families, school administrators have to lead parents by adapting their leadership style. Path-goal leadership can be broken down into multiple leadership behaviors (House & Mitchell, 1974). Participative, supportive, and directive leadership behaviors were prevalent throughout the study. Directive leadership is appropriate for a task that includes ambiguous characteristics, unclear rules, and complexity (Northouse, 2019). A directive leader provides guidance and structure (Northouse, 2019). Some of the leaders in the study explained situations in which this approach was the most appropriate. Shawn Ross was one principal who utilized this leadership model throughout the study:

We give them the expectations, and they know the expectations. But we also provide them flexibility with meeting those expectations. So, you know, if I-I've got mom telling me that, you know, something happened last night and they've . . . you know, that she couldn't get the kids or . . . then I'm gonna call the teacher and I'm gonna say, "Give the kid an extra day." Um, you know, I think we're as flexible with that stuff and empathetic with tho-those types of problems that they may face, um, that I think they know that we're going to be flexible. There, there haven't been many times where we're not flexible or something. So I think that really helps.

His experiences encompassed leadership behaviors that provide high expectations for students and parents, but were flexible with those expectations when situations arose. Tom Jennings shared this leadership model in his experiences and connected it to non-nuclear families by saying, "Ultimately, we just have to be flexible. We understand situations. We can't take sides, but we can't rule with an iron fist because if we do then the non-nuclear families will suffer." Adjusting one's leadership based on the situation is engrained in the path-goal theory, and directive leadership is one of the approaches that leaders in the study used to help non-nuclear families.

Another leadership behavior is participative, or leadership that provides involvement by the leader in unclear and unstructured situations (Northouse, 2019). Due to the nature of a non-nuclear family, which may be unstructured or an unclear family situation, participants found themselves using a participative leadership style to help non-nuclear families. During the focus group, the following interaction highlights the participative leadership and shows that the school, and more specifically the administrator, cares about the non-nuclear family:

JUDY CALDWELL: But I think some of those non-nuclear families that don't have that structure, that may not, they've had more bad experiences with school.

TOM JENNINGS: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: So they don't trust us.

DON HOFFMAN: 'Cause, well, again, they counted on school . . .

JUDY CALDWELL: Exactly.

DON HOFFMAN: . . . to bring them their norm, their normal.

JUDY CALDWELL: So I, I think, in theory, yes.

DON HOFFMAN: Mm-hmm.

JUDY CALDWELL: You know, if a-a-any type of motivation if you see that your efforts are being fulfilled, certainly that motivates you. There's no question.

DON HOFFMAN: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: Yeah. And if they know that we care, and we've shown them that we care, that does boost their confidence in us.

DON HOFFMAN: Sure. Sure.

JUDY CALDWELL: Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: And we have to go above and beyond to show that we care.

JUDY CALDWELL: Yeah.

Participants in the study also used supportive leadership behaviors, which provide nurturance to followers with repetitive or mundane tasks (Northouse, 2019). This leadership model came into play more often when participants were speaking about students from non-nuclear families in general. Several leaders in the study put a humanistic approach to handling students. For example, Dave Davis stated,

There's times that I carry on a father figure or, um, uncle . . . when they've done something bad, but to understand why they got in trouble. So, um, I have the unique ability to adjust my style to try to have a teachable moment instead of just a punitive discipline.

This approach, although common, came at a cost to the administrator. Dave continued:

But, um, on a grander scale, when bigger things happen or when they're school decisions, you know, I, I have sometimes taken some backlash or said, "Well, you know, are you being fair? Do you like certain kids more than others?" Those are . . . that's the balancing act that has to happen with the whole consideration of homelife background, intellectual needs. So, so there is a fine line between trying to do what's right and still s-staying fair and objective.

Marty Daniels talked about a routine he goes through with non-nuclear families that struggle:

Um, so we try to . . . if we see a scenario like that [a non-nuclear student who is struggling], we try to put them with one of us, uh, where we meet . . . I'll put it on my calendar to meet once, once every . . . depending upon the scenario, once every week or once every 2 weeks, half hour, 15 minutes, something . . . just snip it, pull them out of class, "Hey, what's going on? How's your week?" trying to just get that little bit of rapport in.

This supportive leadership model is in accordance with path-goal theory, when the leader is looking to assist in a mundane situation.

Regardless of leadership style, the impact of parental investment on expectations in social settings was limited because of system failures. To remove barriers for non-nuclear families, a financial cost is associated with that removal. Don Hoffman offered activity buses to his students

the previous school year because they had an influx of revenue, “I’ve had . . . that’s the transportation for a lot of them, say, ‘I can’t get a ride home,’ you know. We’ve had activity buses before. We . . . you know, not every year we’ve had that.” School administrators are limited in their ability to circumvent transportation, financial, and mental-health barriers because of a lack of school funding.

In addition, the family structure may inhibit the school administrator from leading the family. In social settings like parent-teacher conferences or open house nights, a school administrator may reach out to parents and provide them with information on how to best invest in their child’s education. However, some families do not participate in their social settings for a variety of reasons, as Walter Boyd explained:

I’ve also seen the, the parents that are completely disengaged, too, you know, and, and sometimes, justified, again, if they’re working, or you know, they’ve had a bad experience with school. I, I think schools struggle, in general, with . . . especially secondary schools with, um, communicating with families. Like, we . . . you know, we-we’ve branched out to social media here. And you know . . . you know, if you’re using email . . . like, if we have an event, trying to get people to come in, we’re not getting people to come in. And if it’s . . . and it’s . . . if you . . . if it’s viewed as . . . I think parent-teacher conferences, too often, are viewed as a negative event, you know . . . as opposed . . . like, if you have an open house, and you’re just coming in to learn about a kid’s class, you know, “Hey, I’m, I’m Mr. So-and-So. I teach chemistry. And you know, here’s what your child’s gonna learn,” as opposed to going into a . . . and finding out, specifically, about your child. Like, some people don’t wanna be in that situation.

[laughter] Because they feel . . . they feel it’s also a, um . . . it, it reflects on them, too.

In general, school administrators were eager to help non-nuclear families. In social settings, the participants all expressed a desire to adjust their leadership model based on the needs of the family to best guide them through the obstacles in their place. Unfortunately, there are some barriers that school administrators could not address either because of the restrictions placed upon the school or the structure of the family in the situation. This resulted in an arduous dynamic in which the school administrator sought to help, but continuously approached barriers of their own.

### ***Research SQ2***

SQ2 was, “What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators’ perceptions regarding the impact of motivation on parental investment for non-nuclear families?” Data collected from individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing prompt were used to answer this question and build Major Themes 1, 2, and 4. An assumption of expectancy theory is that the motivation to perform a task is based on a person’s expectations or beliefs (Razik & Swanson, 2010). The parental expectations and beliefs tied into parental investment for most participants. Marty Daniels experienced parental motivation as, “The more motivated I am for my child to be successful, then the more invested I’m going to be for, uh, for my child to be successful, um, both academically . . . or not just both. Academically, behaviorally, athletically, right?” In Marty’s experience, parents who are motivated for their child to succeed also had a high level of parental investment.

As a result of this shared experience, most participants were driven to get their parents motivated. At times, there are barriers that inhibit parental motivation which could lead to investment. Donna Dunkeld explained,



All parents do want what's best for their kid no matter who, no matter what parent is involved. They all do. Even the least-involved parents still want what's best for their kid.

And they try, but sometimes they just don't have the resources to provide.

If they do not have the resources to provide, the school administrators have tried to remove those barriers. School administrators in the study have sent buses to pick up parents with transportation obstacles, meet with parents on Saturdays for those who had time barriers, and found multiple ways to work around communication barriers. All these tasks require extra work and effort from the school administrators, but that was a welcomed sacrifice to get the parent motivated to invest in their child's education.

Unfortunately, some participants expressed frustrations when parental motivation seemed to be lacking, regardless of their efforts. This is in accordance with expectancy theory that suggests parents are free to choose their behavior based on the expectations they have from the school (Lunenburg, 2011). Don Hoffman expressed this frustration from the standpoint of a family that is barely surviving at home:

That's not their . . . their priority isn't to be involved because they're just . . . they're surviving at home. And, and they're trying to create that environment at home. So I definitely think that their ability to include it is, is challenged.

In survival situations, the school is limited in how they can assist the parents, which means that parental investment may be a goal that cannot be achieved. Donna Dunkeld believed the school needs to be accepting and not judgmental of the family situation in those situations:

Probably the biggest thing after thinking about all this is all parents do want what's best for their kid no matter who, no matter what parent is involved. They all do. Even the

least-involved parents still want what's best for their kid. And they try, but sometimes they just don't have the resources to provide.

School administrators throughout the study referenced teaching parents from non-nuclear families. Tom Jennings mentioned this dynamic in the focus group: "We're teaching the parents just like the teachers are trying to teach the kids." To build that dynamic, relationships must be built between the school and the home. Walter Boyd expressed this building of relationships with non-nuclear families:

Trying to . . . trying to . . . just trying to build relationships that are . . . that are positive and not negative. Um, you know, maybe you have to have hard conversations with people about whatever it may be, but you also wanna make sure that the . . . they understand that we're all working together. We're all trying to . . . we're all here for the best interests of the student.

All participants referenced that they maintain the focus of that relationship on the best interests of the student. By establishing that point as the focus for all conversations, they can assist the non-nuclear family and help bridge the gaps between the school and the home.

In some instances, it can be challenging to lead families through the barriers presented by their non-nuclear status. This was a constant area of reflection for the participants. Most referenced that they enjoyed participating in the study because it allowed them to reflect on their practices and how they could become better at helping the families. Some even mentioned the need to think of non-nuclear families as a subgroup. Judy Caldwell explained that would effectively define how the school can best help non-nuclear families:

I think awareness is important, um, and maybe how administrators cannot make them . . . remind administrators that, you know, this may be a different subgroup to not . . . to

understand that they may have different needs than your other parents. A-and how can we support those needs? You know, whether it's, um, I think, giving ideas, you know, "Here's ways you can support them. Here's things that, uh, you know, have worked well with other . . . in other districts, and this is something that can support them and help them."

### ***Research SQ3***

SQ3 was, "What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions of their ability to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers?" As was the case with the first two SQs, data collected from individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a writing prompt were used to answer this question and build Major Themes 2 and 4. Participants expressed frustration with addressing parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. This frustration was not always directed at the non-nuclear family structure. Instead, most of the frustration was directed toward the educational system, judicial system, or society in general. The frustration of the participants came when these systems failed despite parental motivation being present. The theory guiding this study was path-goal theory which explains a leader's selection of a leadership style based on the subordinate's motivation (House & Mitchell, 1975). The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated the stress placed upon the systems put in place to help families. Jasmine Russell expressed the frustrations of trying to help families, but being faced with system failures:

Um, it's frustrating, um, especially this year. I mean, we've called the police and had to leave voice mails. We've had students call Crisis on their own and had to call four or five times before they get to somebody. So with the system being overwhelmed, in general, it's hard to say, "You know, you have this big issue. Like, you're in my office in tears

‘cause you don’t know what to do with your kid. I can’t do anything but tell you to contact somebody who may not be able to get to you for 6 weeks, 2 months, whatever it may be.”

This helpless feeling was familiar to the study participants when presented with situations that were above and beyond the role of school administrator, but the expectations were still placed on the school.

Even with system failures creating obstacles when the school administrator tried to help, it did not hinder the school administrator’s perception of their ability to lead. Every participant in the study stated they were able to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers. Shawn Ross stated, “I believe I’m, I’m well-prepared to help assist those. And again, the . . . where I’m well-prepared is I believe we have resources to help all these kids out in one way, shape, or form.” All participants in the study spoke about being prepared because of the availability of resources. However, when we dug deeper into the availability of resources, those aspects of frustrations surfaced when those resources were not enough or unavailable.

There were instances in the study when participants expressed that they were not prepared for the challenges presented by non-nuclear families. All participants shared that there was no preparation for handling non-nuclear families while obtaining their administrator certifications. Dave Davis shared this sentiment:

I have to be honest . . . that is not something I was prepared . . . I was prepared to interpret data, redo curriculum, how to administer discipline, being fair and equitable to all students, using data to make decisions. I can keep regurgitating back pocket or things, but that question, um, is one that I do not feel like I was educated with the social background to handle those items other than what I self-taught myself.

This notion of being self-taught about addressing non-nuclear families' parental investment challenges was consistent across participants and throughout the study. Therefore, the participants felt that they could lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers, but were not prepared to do so within their career preparation courses.

### **Summary**

Data were collected from 12 school administrators at public high schools in Central Pennsylvania through face-to-face interviews, a focus group, and a written prompt. Through epoché, I was able to remove my personal biases and experiences so that I could view the phenomenon as the participants experienced it. After the data were collected, transcribed, and entered into the NVivo software, the transcripts were coded to identify common themes and similar wording among the participants. The codes were used to arrive at five major themes that described the participants' lived experiences as it pertained to helping non-nuclear families address parental investment barriers.

The first theme was the phenomenon resulted in extra work for the school administrators. When addressing the parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families, school administrators found themselves giving extra time, resources, and efforts to assist the family. The second theme was that working with non-nuclear families requires certain leadership practices. The school administrators expressed how they would change their leadership style depending on the situation presented by the non-nuclear family. In the theme of an expectation of barrier removal, school administrators expressed an expectation from non-nuclear families to remove the obstacles to their investment in their child's education. The feeling helpless theme highlighted participants' experiences with trying to assist non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers, but their efforts being futile. Finally, the last theme was system failures. Throughout the

study, participants expressed how when helping non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers, the systems put in place to best assist these families were exposed for their failures. Each of the themes was then combined to answer the subquestions posed within the study, which also addressed the CRQ. Finally, through the analysis of the data, construction of the themes, and answering the research questions, textural and structural statements were created to arrive at the phenomenon's essence.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe school administrators' lived experiences with leading non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers. This chapter describes the findings and implications of this study in line with the research questions. The summary of findings is followed by a discussion on the implications through the lens of path-goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1975) and expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) that informed this study. I also describe practical implications and discuss the limitations of the study. Finally, I detail future recommendations for research with school administrators leading non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers.

### **Summary of Findings**

This section presents a summary of the findings related to the research questions:

CRQ: What is the essence of Central Pennsylvania school administrators' shared lived experiences regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families?

SQ1: What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding the impact of parental investment on expectations for non-nuclear families in social settings?

SQ2: What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions regarding the impact of motivation on parental investment for non-nuclear families?

SQ3: What are Central Pennsylvania school administrators' perceptions of their ability to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers?

**Central Research Question**

The general shared experiences of school administrators regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families was that the experience is frustrating. All participants expressed a desire to do whatever it takes to help a child become successful. In non-nuclear households, barriers exist that inhibit parental investment. Through their leadership roles, the school administrators attempted to remove or diminish the obstacle the best they could. This would require additional work, time, and resources; all of which are limited at public schools. This was a source of frustration, not toward the non-nuclear household, but toward the educational system as a whole.

**Research Subquestion 1**

In social settings, school administrators experienced a different level of parental investment than in the academic realm. In their experiences, there was a difference in the level of parental investment between nuclear and non-nuclear families when it came to academics. Although those barriers still existed for the social realm, those barriers were perceived to not be as prevalent if they involved an extra-curricular. The barriers were still an issue with social settings such as parent-teacher conferences or open house nights at the school. This led some participants to encourage student participation in extra-curriculars to get parental investment in other aspects of the child's life.

**Research Subquestion 2**

Participants expressed that parental motivation can come from a variety of sources. Some of these sources for motivation can be good and bad. However, all participants agreed that parental motivation was the key to parental investment. Some school administrators in the study experienced parental motivation to be affected by parent's prior experiences as a student



themselves. None of the participants related any experiences with parental motivation being different between nuclear or non-nuclear families. It was reiterated multiple times in several interviews that all parents are motivated for their children to be successful.

### **Research Subquestion 3**

The participant's perception of their ability to lead was dependent on their personal background. Participants who were from a non-nuclear family or were raising their children in a non-nuclear setting felt more able to lead non-nuclear parents through parental investment challenges. This perceived increased ability came from the belief that they understood the non-nuclear family more than most.

Participants who were not from a non-nuclear family perceived themselves to be at a disadvantage, but did not go as far as to say they were unable to lead a non-nuclear family through parental investment challenges. These participants found other ways to prepare themselves for this task. The more experienced administrators called upon their experience to explain why they were prepared. Through a trial-and-error approach, these administrators were able to gain the necessary knowledge to lead non-nuclear families. Those in the study who did not have as much experience called upon their experiences coaching or being flexible as to why they were prepared to lead non-nuclear families.

None of the participants believed that their education or training prepared them to lead non-nuclear families. The common belief was that this preparedness could only be achieved through forms of experience. That level of experience was different based on the participants' backgrounds and experiences. Regardless, experience was the main aspect that school administrators believed had prepared them for leading non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers.

## Discussion

### Empirical Discussion

Existing research confirms the association between family structure and academic achievement (Carlsmith, 1964, 1973; Jeynes, 2005; Salzman, 1987; Wallerstein & Lewis, 1998). However, there was limited research regarding school administrators' experiences and their perceptions about non-nuclear families and how to assist those families through parental investment barriers. This current study confirms previous research regarding the importance of family structure in regards to educational outcomes, financial investment, and discipline issues (K. Gordon & Fefer, 2019; Sun & Li, 2011). School administrators within this study expressed frustrations with situations presented by non-nuclear family structures with educational outcomes of students, financial investment ability by the family, and discipline issues of students from non-nuclear families.

One characteristic that was prevalent among school administrators' experiences with non-nuclear families was truancy issues. In the literature, truancy was found to be higher among single-parent families (Cuffe et al., 2017). School administrators in this study explained that students from non-nuclear families were more likely to end up in court because of attendance or the administrators were more likely to have an SAIP meeting with that non-nuclear family. According to the study participants, the structure of the family resulted in miscommunication or a lack of communication of the expectations for the student.

Non-nuclear families have become more commonplace in American society (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Coontz (2016) found that these societal changes have made it harder for parents to raise children without assistance. In this study, school administrators expressed that the assistance these families seek usually is expected to come from the school system. Israel et al.

(2001) found that rarely does the government provide resources to public schools in order to help the family in non-academic matters. This was ubiquitous with the participants' experiences as many expressing their desire to help families but the lack of resources in order to do so.

The literature also indicated that parental separation was more likely to result in an increase in risky behavior for the child and poorer mental health (Hussey et al., 2016). This current study adds to the literature as most school administrators in the study shared stories of personal experiences when a child acted out as a result of the separation or needed additional mental health services because of the change in family structure. School administrators are faced with addressing these outcomes of parental separation with limited to no training on how to help that child through the family transition appropriately.

O'Malley et al. (2015) found that one area a school could negate the negative association between non-nuclear families and academics was through school culture. All participants in the study described a welcoming and accommodating school culture. These characteristics were consistent with Gioumouki et al. (2018) which found that a welcoming and accommodating school culture could negate negative associations that are commonly found with parental separation. Both participants from Tyler High School expressed the importance of their school culture in why they do not believe they see as many issues with non-nuclear families as surrounding schools. However, as income increases, so does parental investment and resources for the child, resulting in more effective academic skills (Child Trends, 2018). Therefore the anomaly of the participants from Tyler High School may be accredited to the differing socio-economic status of parents within that specific school district.

Lebow (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic could exacerbate issues for non-nuclear families due to additional stress and instability. This was endemic throughout the

participants experiences. All participants articulated how the COVID-19 pandemic compounded parental investment barriers that were common prior to the pandemic. Van Lancker and Parolin (2020) discovered that during the pandemic many children living in lower-income levels showed greater vulnerability to food insecurity. Participants in the study addressed this parental investment barrier by sending food home with students, even when schools were remote. The COVID-19 pandemic has furthered the inequality of human and social capital that families may put forth to invest in their child's education (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). However, throughout the study, participants revealed ways that they attempted to address these barriers so that the child could have the best education the school could provide.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

This section includes a discussion of the findings as related to the literature review in Chapter Two. I discuss my findings in relation to path-goal theory and expectancy theory. I also detail how the findings relate to the professional overall.

#### ***Path-Goal Theory***

Path-goal theory suggests that leadership is based on situational factors (Olowoselu et al., 2019). Those situational factors include institutional culture, task uncertainty, and subordinates' characteristics (Northouse, 2019). In the study, school administrators from Tyler High School expressed an institutional culture of high expectations for parental investment. Shawn Ross stated, "the one great thing about being at Tyler [High School] is the fact that our community has high expectations. And along with those high expectations become, uh . . . or comes a lot of parental involvement." Therefore, Shawn Ross and Jake Yates expressed directive leadership behaviors. These behaviors included directing families in the proper direction of resources and maintaining a high expectation of parental involvement. The other schools in the study had

leaders whose institutional culture was significantly different from Tyler High School. This difference in institutional culture led most school administrators in the other schools to select a supportive or participative leadership model. The selection of the leadership model was different based on the institutional culture, which is an expansion of path-goal theory into the field of educational leadership.

One aspect of the study that was enlightened by path-goal theory was the limitations placed on the school administrator. Northouse (2019) stated that task uncertainty can affect a leader's style selection. Task uncertainty was not as much of a concern for the administrators as was the uncertainty of whether the systems put in place to assist families would be consistent. The inconsistency in systems like the judicial system, educational system, and social services did not change the leaders' behavior, but instead resulted in frustration. Path-goal theory requires the leader to be aware of the needs and motivations of the subordinate to best lead that individual (Razik & Swanson, 2010). In the present study, the school administrators were aware of the non-nuclear families' needs and motivations, but struggled with providing the appropriate resources due to systematic inconsistencies.

Finally, path-goal theory consists of a leader providing a path around obstacles in place of the goal the subordinate seeks (Northouse, 2019). In the study, the majority of administrators attempted to guide non-nuclear families around the barriers to parental investment. Unfortunately, some barriers, such as time or finances, were more challenging to navigate than others, such as transportation or communication. Regardless, the path-goal theory model provided a structural understanding of school administrator decision-making based on their leadership model selection to assist non-nuclear families best.

### ***Expectancy Theory***

The expectancy model postulates that the motivation to perform a task or function is based on a person's expectations or beliefs (Vroom, 1964). The expectancy model served to guide the study by providing structure to the school administrators' motivations to get non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers. One assumption of expectancy theory is that individuals would choose the best course of action that optimizes the outcome for them personally (Vroom, 1964). In this study, school administrators shared experiences in which they went above and beyond the duties of the position they held to best help the non-nuclear family. The tasks that went above and beyond included school administrators who gave up their Saturdays for one-on-one orientations or provided a ride home to a student whose parents could not provide transportation. Within the context of the expectancy model, the school administrator would be completing these tasks because it would help them personally. However, these school administrators expressed that they did these things because it was the right thing to do or it was what was best for that child.

This study expands expectancy theory based on that fourth assumption of selection of task based on the personal outcome. In this study, the school administrators selected a task based on what was best for the school. All the leaders in the study felt that their actions were a reflection of the school more so than themselves. Therefore, their task selection resulted from optimizing the relationship between the non-nuclear family and the school to accomplish future tasks of the child being successful. This study findings expand the expectancy theory model to include optimizing personal outcomes to institutional outcomes personalized by the leader.

### **Implications**

Studies of school administrators' perceptions of parental investment of non-nuclear families through the lens of path-goal theory and expectancy theory are limited. This study adds

to the current literature by providing the perspective of school administrators in a growing societal demographic. This section addresses the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study.

### **Theoretical Implications**

There are two major theoretical implications for this study. First is the implication that path-goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1975) can be used to explain school administrators' leadership style selection when leading non-nuclear families. Limited research has been conducted that connects path-goal theory to school administrators' leadership style selections. The results of this study and the integration of the theoretical model in this study help expand path-goal theory for future studies.

The second major theoretical implication from this study is based within expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964). One of the four assumptions in expectancy theory is that a person selects the task that optimizes their personal outcome. In this study, the task selection was based on the positive relation of an outcome for the school. The leader in the study personified the school institution while serving within their leadership role. Therefore, this study expands the fourth assumption to a personification of an innate institution.

### **Empirical Implications**

This study contributes to existing literature regarding school administrators' lived experiences with non-nuclear families' parental investment barriers. The literature revealed that school administrators attempt to be educational leaders while simultaneously attempting to adapt to the expectations of change (Kalkan et al., 2020). Study participants described a balancing act between being educational leaders within their respective positions while also adapting their leadership style to address the parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. Briscoe and

De Oliver (2012) found that school leaders served as the scapegoats for societal problems. Society is currently experiencing a cultural shift in births, transitioning from a majority of nuclear households to non-nuclear households (Lamidi, 2016). The participants perceived that it was the schools' role, and therefore their duty through their position, to address these societal barriers.

Furthermore, Ferrara (2011) found that school leaders desire parental investment, but they say what the parents should do instead of what the school can do to help. The study participants portrayed a similar approach to parental investment barriers; specifically, the communication barriers. A majority of the participants believed that it was the non-nuclear parents' responsibility to keep the school updated with contact information. Participants seemed to be wary of the line between being helpful and being intrusive. Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) found that parents were more likely to be engaged with schools when the leaders were perceived as welcoming and supportive. All of the current study participants portrayed a welcoming and supportive demeanor. However, for future studies, an observational component to the data analysis would provide a better understanding of the school leaders' demeanor with non-nuclear parents.

Brajša-Žganec et al. (2019) found that the household environment was associated with behavioral issues at school. Lim et al. (2019) built off this research, finding that behavioral problems then led to attendance issues. Attendance issues have also been found to be greater in non-nuclear households (Cuffe et al., 2017). Participants in the present study expressed similar experiences with attendance issues among non-nuclear families. Behavioral and attendance issues were the main negative interactions that school administrators in the study experienced when dealing with non-nuclear families.



## **Practical Implications**

In today's American society, it is more challenging to raise children without assistance from society or extended family (Coontz, 2016). Many children experience family instability throughout the course of their life, which adds to the need for assistance (Umberson & Thomeer, 2020). Smock and Schwartz (2020) found that family instability had negative association with children's academic achievement. Therefore, this present study has important practical implications on how school leaders perceive and respond to this growing instability in the American family. This study expanded upon the current research that explains the parental investment barriers faced by the non-nuclear family (An & Sorensen, 2017; Gautam, 2013; Lim et al., 2019). This study also expands upon Sun and Li's (2011) research finding that parental investment in a child's education can lead to success, but disruptions in the family structure result in a decline in that parental investment.

### ***Implications for School Leaders***

Results indicated that school leaders need more support and financial assistance. M. F. Gordon and Louis (2009) found that poverty level did not influence whether or not principals were open to community involvement. Similarly, participants in this current study expressed that their communities' demographics did not affect their beliefs about parental investment. However, participants were more empathic to the challenges that non-nuclear families face when trying to invest in their child's education. Participants attempted to negate the parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families.

Huang et al. (2017) found that the school can positively increase academic outcomes for non-nuclear families if they promote a disciplinary structure, student support programs, and high academic expectations. All of the current study participants discussed a promotion of one of

these three characteristics. Participants described a robust disciplinary structure with their explanation of the school handbook that set forth the rules and expectations of the child and family for that given school year. However, school administrators expressed frustrations with such a stringent handbook. Some participants even went as far as waiving some of the handbook criteria for non-nuclear families to provide them a path to parental investment.

Student support programs were common among participants' experiences. However, as expressed by most participants, these programs were either underfunded or at maximum capacity. Israel et al. (2001) found that state and local resources were rarely provided to the public schools for enhancing families' capacity to provide an environment that promotes their child's education. Participants experienced this lack of resources first hand and were expected to supplement those services with their current structure. School districts need to consider adding support staff and resources to fully fund and staff the services required by the non-nuclear families so that the school administrator is not expected to take on these roles alone.

School leaders should also seek professional development in the areas of family counseling and be informed about the services available to families. As the leader within the school, school administrators have constant contact with families. Participants expressed that non-nuclear families share their hardships and struggles with them during meetings and phone conversations. Being informed and trained in how to assist the non-nuclear families would better prepare the school administrator to handle those situations.

### ***Implications for Higher Learning***

Findings suggest that additional training and coursework are needed for school administrator programs. Previous literature suggests that family structure and family transitions matter to children's education (Sun & Li, 2011). However, currently, school administrator

programs do not include a family structure component. All of the study participants expressed that they were not formally trained to handle a majority of the non-nuclear family issues that they face.

The concept of family is always in a state of transition (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). Therefore, school administrator preparatory programs should include a component that prepares future leaders in the field of family dynamics. Researcher-based instruction on how to best interact with a non-nuclear family, handle communication barriers, and address barriers to parental investment would better prepare future school administrators in a changing educational environment. Previous literature has indicated that children of divorced or separated parents have lower academic achievement than do their nuclear family counterparts (Laursen et al., 2019). If there is an identified population of disadvantaged students, training should be available to help this subgroup. Participants continued to express throughout the study that their only training was through their own experiences, whether personally or professionally. Therefore, higher education institutions need to reconsider their school administrator training curriculums. These programs should include a component on the majority family structure in America: non-nuclear families. Training programs should also include proper and effective techniques in addressing parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families.

### ***Implications for Policymakers***

This study exposed the need for policymakers to provide additional funding to schools to better serve the growing non-nuclear family populations that are taxing the school system. Participants throughout the study expressed frustration in the lack of funding for various services, lack of availability for services, and the inconsistencies among the institutions that are put into place to help the families and the school. Policymakers should understand the changing

demographics in American society and set up the public school system as a haven for assistance to put forth an educated populace.

Lack of funding is always a concern in the public realm. At the public school level, a lack of funding results in a lack of services for families that need them. Each participant in the study shared that they had a social worker within the school. However, some shared that social worker with another district or had that individual contracted for a couple of days a week due to limited funding. Social workers provide a plentitude of services to non-nuclear families and connect them with the proper services to help navigate barriers to their parental investment. Policymakers should consider appropriate fundings so that each school can employ a social worker that can serve struggling non-nuclear families.

During the focus group, the lack of available services came to light as a frustration for the school administrators. As a result of the lack of services, the school was expected to supplement these services while also maintaining high academic standards. Policymakers should consider either increasing the availability of social services in rural regions like Central Pennsylvania or provide additional personnel and funding to schools so that they can add these services to their daily routine. By adding these services, the school administrators can refocus their attention to ensuring the academic rigor of the educational institution.

The inconsistencies put in place to help the families and the school was a concern for school administrators in the study that policymakers could address. This was most common while discussing attendance and truancy. If the child, under the age of 18, has been truant, the school can take the parents to the local magistrate to resolve the attendance issue. Additionally, children that are 18 may still be attending school, yet cannot be taken to the magistrate for being

truant. To resolve this inconsistency, policymakers should consider changing the wording of the current law from “under 18” to “school-aged” children.

Once the child and family are taken to the magistrate for an attendance issue, further frustration was experienced. The frustration at this level was that school administrators faced inconsistent rulings based on the individual magistrate. To resolve this inconsistency, policymakers could consider a mandated minimum consequence for parents whose child is habitually truant. This would ease the frustration of the school administrator as well as the pressure of the magistrate, who is an elected official, and encourage the parent to ensure the child is attending school.

### ***Implications for Non-Nuclear Families***

The findings of this study revealed the expectations that school administrators and schools have for non-nuclear families in terms of parental investment and navigating the barriers to that investment. Parental investment can be broken down into two categories, home-based and school-based investment (Murray et al., 2014). The school-based investment was the focus of the school administrators’ experiences and provided a better understanding of what schools view as the responsibility of the non-nuclear parent. Throughout the study, the school administrators expressed a willingness to help non-nuclear families through their parental investment barriers. Children with parents who participate in their child’s education by investing in their child are more likely to have better grades, fewer behavioral issues, and fewer social issues (Garbacz et al., 2017). However, there is a significant relationship between family structure and academic achievement (Reschly & Christenson, 2018). The school administrators in the study understood this dynamic and therefore were motivated to help non-nuclear families invest in their children.

The most common way school administrators attempted to assist non-nuclear families was to remove or ease the barrier that was in place of parental investment. To identify that barrier, a relationship needed to be established between the household and the school. This was the first obstacle in school administrators helping the non-nuclear family. The participants in the study expected non-nuclear households to have updated forms of communication available to the school. The participants also expected the non-nuclear family to be open and upfront with the needs that they have. All participants expressed that they did not judge family situations and did not want the non-nuclear family to be embarrassed. However, the school administrators needed to know the barriers so that they could help the family navigate them appropriately.

This willingness to help was consistent throughout the study. This willingness to assist expands upon Umberson and Thomeer's (2020) finding that children experience a good deal of family instability throughout the course of their life. Although family instability has been found to negatively correlate with the child's academics, school administrators are willing and able to help neutralize the barriers that result in those negative correlations. One way the family can help their child is by updating the school on the household situation and the family's needs. This can begin with providing the school with updated contact information.

In order to best serve non-nuclear families, it needs to be communicated that schools are a social service that can help with barriers that impact academic needs. Non-nuclear families may not be aware of the school's ability or willingness to assist the family until it is too late and the barrier has grown to insurmountable heights. An information campaign from the government level, school level, and social service level can help families understand the services available to them. The state and school can communicate what the school can do and that the school is there to help, not to judge. Social services, such as adoption agencies or family courts, can

communicate the advantages of the schools' willingness to help when a family transition occurs. With the knowledge of the school's ability to help, it then rests on the non-nuclear guardians to meet the school administrator halfway and establish a relationship that best serves that child.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of school administrators in Central Pennsylvania with leading non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers. Delimitations include utilizing a purposeful sample, site selection, and the scope of the study. I used purposeful sampling because I sought erudite participants so that I could understand the phenomenon as experienced by the individual. The purposeful sampling strategy used for this study was a key-knowledgeable strategy. Key knowledgeable sampling enables the researcher to identify trends and future directions of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). A key knowledgeable individual is an individual who has specific knowledge about the topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I sampled school administrators with at least 5 years of high school experience and 2 years of administrative experience so that they had experience with the phenomenon from an administrative perspective before the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools in Central Pennsylvania were selected to ensure that bias would not affect the study because of my relationships with administrators in the area. Potential participants were emailed a screening survey (Appendix C) and asked to return the survey for consideration in the study.

There were also limitations in this study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to collect in-depth descriptions of the lived experiences from a small number of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data saturation was achieved with 12 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). One limitation of the study was the lack of diversity: All

participants in the study were White. This sample may not have been representative of all school administrator experiences; however, the sampling was representative of Central Pennsylvania administrators. All participants agreed to participate in this study voluntarily. Therefore, they may have been more confident in their ability to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment challenges than a potential participant who did not agree to be in the study. Finally, the geographical location presented a limitation to the results because the school administrators were all located in Central Pennsylvania.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the implications of the results of this study and the increasing number of non-nuclear families in American society, further research is recommended to understand better the challenges school administrators face with addressing the needs of this growing subgroup. The findings of this study implicated the need for social services in the school district as well as additional funding for services currently being provided. Research on established methods, such as barrier removal, is needed to determine if this is an appropriate and useful leadership approach to addressing non-nuclear family barriers. Research from the non-nuclear household perspective on the appropriate level of intervention from the school would help clarify the school's role. Previous literature indicated that school leaders' demeanor when engaging with participants correlated with parental investment (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). An observational data analysis component to this study would expand upon understanding school administrator experiences with non-nuclear families and whether their demeanor is consistent with their portrayal in this study. Finally, additional research is needed on whether current leadership practices effectively negate the academic disparity between nuclear and non-nuclear households. Future research



should include school administrators, students, non-nuclear parents, and social workers across a larger geographical region with more diversity in participant selection.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the shared lived experiences of Central Pennsylvanian high school administrators regarding parental investment barriers for non-nuclear families. The study consisted of one central research question and three guiding subquestions. The data were collected from 12 participants through personal interviews, a focus group discussion, and a writing prompt.

Through data analysis, five themes were identified. The five major themes of the study included extra work for the administrator, the requirement of certain leadership practices, barrier removal is expected, school administrators feel helpless, and systematic failures. Participants in the study revealed frustrations regarding assisting non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers and expressed a strong desire to help those families in need. Participants expressed that their position is no longer focused on academic rigor, but is mostly consumed with social services such as assisting non-nuclear families. The path-goal theory (House & Mitchell, 1975) and expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) were applied to connect the empirical and theoretical literature. The empirical literature showed a correlation between what research has stated about non-nuclear families and their parental investment barriers and what school administrators in the field have experienced as parental investment barriers.

There are two significant implications of this study. First, the results call for additional support in the form of funding and services in public schools to alleviate the burden on school administrators and create pathways for parental investment for non-nuclear families. The second significant implication from the results is the need for additional training and coursework in the

field of non-nuclear families. The American family is in a state of transition; cohabitation and stepfamilies constitute the majority of family structures having children (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). School administrators are going to be increasingly faced with the parental investment barriers that these family structures present. Therefore, additional training and research are needed to create a public school system that best serves an ever-changing American family.

## REFERENCES

- Ainsworth, J. W. (2002). Why does it take a village? The mediation of neighborhood effects on educational achievement. *Social Forces*, 81(1), 117–152.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2002.0038>
- Almond, B. (2008). Family: Social construction or natural phenomenon. *Studies*, 97(385), 29–43.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25660533>
- Amato, P. R., Patterson, S., & Beattie, B. (2015). Single-parent households and children's educational achievement: A state-level analysis. *Social Science Research*, 53, 191–202.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.05.012>
- An, B. P., & Sorensen, K. N. (2017). Family structure changes during high school and college selectivity. *Research in Higher Education*, 58(7), 695–722.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-016-9445-8>
- Anastasiou, S., & Papagianni, A. (2020). Parents', teachers', and principals' views on parental involvement in secondary education schools in Greece. *Education Sciences*, 10(3), 69.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/educsci10030069>
- Arenas, E. (2017). Abuelos at home: Differential impact on children's education by family structure. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 52, 36–48.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2017.09.001>
- Baidoo-Anu, D., Abiaw, P., & Kaedebi-Donkor, R. (2019). Parenting styles as a predictor of academic achievement of junior high school students in Aowin and Suaman District, Ghana. *Parenting*, 10(19). doi:10.7176/JEP/10-19-06
- Ballotpedia. (2015). *Public education in Pennsylvania*. Retrieved July 3, 2020, from  
[https://ballotpedia.org/Public\\_education\\_in\\_Pennsylvania](https://ballotpedia.org/Public_education_in_Pennsylvania)

- Barr, J., & Saltmarsh, S. (2014). It all comes down to the leadership: The role of the school principal in fostering parent-school engagement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(4), 491–505.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213502189>
- Baumann, M. R., & Bonner, B. L. (2017). An expectancy theory approach to group coordination: Expertise, task features, and member behavior. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 30(2), 407–419. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bdm.1954>
- Bello, S., Ibi, M. B., & Bukar, I. B. (2016). Principals' administrative styles and students' academic performance in Taraba state secondary schools, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(18), 62–69. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1105873.pdf>
- Bengtson, V. L. (2001). Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multigenerational bonds. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(1), 1–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00001.x>
- Berlin, G., & Sum, A. (1988). *Toward a more perfect union: Basic skills, poor families, and our economic future* (Ford Foundation Project on Social Welfare & American Future, Vol. 3). Ford Foundation. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED297037.pdf>
- Brajša-Žganec, A., Merkaš, M., & Šakić Velić, M. (2019). The relations of parental supervision, parental school involvement, and child's social competence with school achievement in primary school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56(8), 1246–1258.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22273>
- Briscoe, F. M., & De Oliver, M. (2012). School leaders' discursive constructions of low-income and minority families' identities: A marketplace racism/classism. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 9(3), 247–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2012.627028>

- Brock, S., & Edmunds, A. L. (2010). Parental involvement: Barriers and opportunities. *EAF Journal*, 21(1), 48–59.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32, 513–531. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513>
- Brooks, D. (2020, February 10). *The nuclear family was a mistake*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/03/the-nuclear-family-was-a-mistake/605536/>
- Brown, S. M., Doom, J., Watamura, S., Lechuga-Pena, S., & Koppels, T. (2020, June 29). *Stress and parenting during the global COVID-19 pandemic*. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/ucezm>
- Burgess, S., & Sievertsen, H. H. (2020). *The impact of COVID-19 on education*. VoxEU. <https://voxeu.org/article/impact-covid-19-education>
- Burmeister, E., & Aitken, L. M. (2012). Sample size: How many is enough? *Australian Care*, 25(4), 271–274. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aucc.2012.07.002>
- Buzdar, M. A., & Fatima, T. (2018). Impact of thinking preferences on the leadership styles of school principals. *Management Research and Practice*, 10(3), 80–89.
- Cantillon, B., Chzhen, Y., Handa, S., & Nolan, B. (Eds.). (2017). *Children of austerity: Impact of the great recession on child poverty in rich countries*. Oxford University Press.
- Carlsmith, L. (1964). Effect of early father absence on scholastic aptitude. *Harvard Educational Review*, 34(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.34.1.t23173u451jhu637>
- Carlsmith, L. (1973). Some personality characteristics of boys separated from their fathers during World War II. *Ethos*, 1(4), 466–477. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/640193>

- Carlson, A. C. (2017). Family phases: The history of family strength in America may reveal good news. *The Chesterton Review*, 43(1/2), 257–263.  
<https://doi.org/10.5840/chesterton2017431/242>
- Cavanagh, S. E. (2012). Family structure and academic achievement. In J. A. Banks (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (Vol. 2, pp. 889–892). SAGE Reference.
- Cavanagh, S. E., & Fomby, P. (2019). Family instability in the lives of American children. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45(1), 493–513. doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022633
- Cetin, M., & Halisdemir, M. (2019). School administrators and Generation Z students' perspectives for a better educational setting. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 7(2), 84–97. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v7i2.3773>
- Ch, A. H., Ahmad, S., Malik, M., & Batool, A. (2017). Principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction: A correlation study at secondary level. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 39(3), 45–56. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1210232.pdf>
- Cherlin, A. J. (2014). *Labor's love lost: The rise and fall of the working-class family in America*. Russell Sage.
- Cherlin, A. J. (2020). Degrees of change: An assessment of the deinstitutionalization of marriage thesis. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 62–80. doi:10.1111/jomf.12605
- Chiang, C. F., & Jang, S. S. (2008). An expectancy theory model for hotel employee motivation. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(2), 313–322.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2007.07.017>
- Child Trends. (2018, September 16). *Parental involvement in schools*. Retrieved August 3, 2020, from <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/parental-involvement-in-schools>

- Child Trends. (2019, May 8). *Births to unmarried women*. Retrieved June 3, 2020, from <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/births-to-unmarried-women>
- Cluver, L., Lachman, J. M., Sherr, L., Wessels, I., Krug, E., Rakotomalala, S., Blight, S., Hillis, S., Bachman, G., Green, O., Butchart, A., Tomlinson, M., Ward, C. L., Doubt, J., & McDonald, K. (2020). Parenting in a time of COVID-19. *Lancet*, 395(10231), e64. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30736-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30736-4)
- Comacchia, C. (2020). *History of family*. <https://family.jrank.org/pages/493/Family-History.html>
- Conger, K. J., & Conger, R. D. (1994). Differential parenting and change in sibling differences in delinquency. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 8(3), 287–302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.8.3.287>
- Conger, R. D., & Donnellan, M. B. (2007). An interactionist perspective on the socio-economic context of human development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 175–199. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.58.110405.085551>
- Conger, R. D., Wallace, L. E., Sun, Y., Simmons, R. L., McLoyd, V. C., & Brody, G. H. (2002). Economic pressure in African American families. *Developmental Psychology*, 38(2), 179–193. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.38.2.179>
- Coontz, S. (2016). *The way we never were: American families and the nostalgia trap*. Basic Books.
- Corrás, T., Seijo, D., Fariña, F., Novo, M., Arce, R., & Cabanach, R. G. (2017). What and how much do children lose in academic settings owing to parental separation? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1545. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01545>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

- Crosnoe, R. (2015). Continuities and consistencies across home and school systems. In S. M. Sheridan, & E. M. Kim (Eds.), *Processes and pathways of family-school partnerships across development* (pp. 61–80). Springer.
- Cuffe, H. E., Waddell, G. R., & Bignell, W. (2017). Can school sports reduce racial gaps in truancy and achievement? *Economic Inquiry*, 55(4), 1966–1985.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ecin.12452>
- Daniel, K., Wolfe, C. D., Busch, M. A., & McKeivitt, C. (2009). What are the social consequences of stroke for working-aged adults? A systematic review. *Stroke*, 40, e431–e440. <https://doi.org/10.1161/STROKEAHA.108.534487>
- Devor, C. S., Stewart, S. D., & Dorius, C. (2018). Parental divorce, social capital, and postbaccalaureate educational attainment among young adults. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(10), 2806–2835. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18760349>
- Dew, J., Britt, S., & Huston, S. (2012). Examining the relationship between financial issues and divorce. *Family Relations*, 61, 615–628. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00715.x>
- Dixon, M. L., & Hart, L. K. (2010). The impact of path-goal leadership styles on work group effectiveness and turnover intention. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 22(1), 52–69.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25822515>
- Dominguez-Martinez, R., Jones, S. D., & Walther, C. S. (2020). The non-traditional family. In D. N. Farris & A. J. J. Bourque (Eds.), *International handbook on the demography of marriage and the family* (pp. 201–213). Springer Publishing.
- Edgell, P. (2006). *Religion and family in a changing society*. Princeton University Press.



- Egalite, A. J. (2016). How family background influence student achievement: Can schools narrow the gap? *Education Next*, 16(2), 70–78.
- Elizabeth, V. (2008). Another string to our bow: Participant writing as research method. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-9.1.331>
- Farrell, B., VandeVusse, A., & Ocobock, A. (2012). Family change and the state of family sociology. *Current Sociology*, 60(3), 283–301.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0011392111425599>
- Fernandes, N. (2020, March 22). *Economic effects of coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) on the world economy* (ISESE Business School Working Paper No. WP-1240-E).  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3557504](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3557504)
- Ferrara, M. M. (2011). Phrase versus phase: Family engagement. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 84(5), 180–183.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2010.550953>
- Finer, L. B. (2007). Trends in premarital sex in the United States, 1954–2003. *Public Health Reports*, 122(1), 73–78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003335490712200110>
- Fomby, P., & Cherlin, A. J. (2007). Family instability and child well-being. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 181–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200203>
- Fortes, M. (1933). Step parenthood and juvenile delinquency. *Sociological Review*, 25, 153–158.
- Furstenberg, F. F. (2015). Will marriage disappear? *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 159(3), 214–246. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26159134>
- Garbacz, S. A., Herman, K. C., Thompson, A. M., & Reinke, W. M. (2017). Family engagement in education and intervention: Implementation and evaluation to maximize family,

- school, and student outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, 62, 1–10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.04.002>
- Gates, G. J. (2012). *Family formation and raising children among same-sex couples* (Report FF51, F2–F4). National Council on Family Relations.  
<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-Badgett-NCFR-LGBT-Families-December-2011.pdf>
- Gates, G. J. (2015). *Demographics of married and unmarried same-sex couples: Analyses of the 2013 American community survey*. Williams Institute, University of California Los Angeles School of Law. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Deomgraphics-Same-Sex-Couples-ACS2013-March-2015.pdf>
- Gautam, P. K. (2013). Gender, family structure, income level of family and academic achievement. *Discovery: A Journal of Research and Development*, 1(2), 90–96.
- Ghosh, R., Dubey, M. J., Chatterjee, S., & Dubey, S. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on children: Special focus on psychosocial aspect. *Minerva Pediatrica*, 72(3), 226–235.  
<https://doi.org/10.23736/s0026-4946.20.05887-9>
- Gibson-Davis, C. M. (2016). Single and cohabiting parents and poverty. In D. Brady & L. Burton (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the social science of poverty* (pp. 417–437). Oxford University Press.
- Ginther, D. K., Grisdal, A. L., & Pollak, R. A. (2019). *Fathers' multiple-partner fertility and children's educational outcomes* (No. w26242). National Bureau of Economic Research.  
<https://doi.org/10.3386/w26242>
- Gioumouki, M., Smaili, D., Antoniou, A.-S., & Babalis, T. K. (2018). Single-parent families: School behavioral problems and school interventions. In T. K. Babalis, Y. Xanthacou, &

- M. Kaila (Eds.), *Family issues in the 21st century. Single-parenting in the 21st century: Perceptions, issues and implications* (pp. 185–210). Nova Science Publishers.
- Goodridge v. Department of Public Health, 798 N.E. 2d 941 (Mass. 2003).  
<https://www.casebriefs.com/blog/law/constitutional-law/constitutional-law-keyed-to-shanor/rational-basis-test/goodridge-v-department-of-public-health/>
- Gordon, K., & Fefer, S. (2019). Discipline history and demographics: Which factors relate to school climate perceptions among high school students? *School Psychology Forum, Research in Practice*, 13(1), 16–28.
- Gordon, M. F., & Louis, K. S. (2009). Linking parent and community involvement with student achievement: Comparing principal and teacher perceptions of stakeholder influence. *American Journal of Education*, 116(1), 1–31. <https://doi.org/10.1086/605098>
- Green, G., DeFosset, A., & Kuo, T. (2019, October). Residential mobility among elementary school students in Los Angeles County and early school experiences: Opportunities for early intervention to prevent absenteeism and academic failure. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02176>
- Guttek, G. L. (2011). *Historical and philosophical foundations of education: A biographical introduction*. Pearson.
- Guzzo, K. B. (2014). New partners, more kids: Multiple-partner fertility in the United States. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 654(1), 66–86.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716214525571>
- Hacker, J. D., & Roberts, E. (2017). The impact of kin availability, parental religiosity, and nativity on fertility differentials in the late 19th-century United States. *Demographic Research*, 37(34), 1049-1080. <https://doi.org/10.4054/demres.2017.37.34>

- Hadfield, K., Amos, M., Ungar, M., Gosselin, J., & Ganong, L. (2018). Do changes to family structure affect child and family outcomes? A systematic review of the instability hypothesis. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(1), 87–110.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12243>
- Hadfield, K., Ungar, M., & Nixon, E. (2018). Rethinking discourses of family instability. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 21(2), 172–187.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10522158.2017.1410268>
- Hamlin, D., & Flessa, J. (2018). Parental involvement initiatives: An analysis. *Educational Policy*, 32(5), 697–727. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904816673739>
- Hannum, E., & Xie, Y. (2016). Education. In D. Brady & L. Burton, (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the social science of poverty* (pp. 462–485). Oxford University Press.
- Harper, L. D., & McCunn, R. (2017). “Hand in glove”: Using qualitative methods to connect research and practice. *International Journal of Sports Physiology & Performance*, 12(7), 990–993. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsp.2017-0081>
- Harven, A. M. (2018). The impact of education policies on Black students’ school functioning. In R. Papa & S. W. J. Armfield (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of educational policy* (pp. 225–245). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Hennink, M. M. (2007). *International focus group research: A handbook for the health and social sciences*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hornby, G. (2011). *Parental involvement in childhood education: Building effective school-family partnerships* (1st ed.). Springer.
- Hornby, G., & Blackwell, I. (2018). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An update. *Educational Review*, 70(1), 109–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1388612>

- House, R. J. (1971). A path-goal theory of leader effectiveness. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 16(3), 321-332. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2391905>
- House, R. J., & Mitchell, T. R. (1975). *Path-goal theory of leadership*. <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a009513.pdf>
- Huang, F. L., & Cornell, D. G. (2018). The relationship of school climate with out-of-school suspensions. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 94, 378–389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.08.013>
- Huang, F. L., Eklund, K., & Cornell, D. G. (2017). Authoritative school climate, number of parents at home, and academic achievement. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 32(4), 480–496. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000182>
- Hughes, J. N., Cao, Q., & Kwok, O. (2016). Indirect effects of extracurricular participation on academic adjustment via perceived friends' prosocial norms. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 45(11), 2260–2277. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0508-0>
- Hussey, A., Kanjilal, D., & Nathan, A. (2016). Disruption in parental co-habitation and its effects on short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes of adolescents. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 37(1), 58–74. doi:10.1007/s10834-014-9435-y
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §1400 (2004). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-i/1400>
- Israel, G. D., Beaulieu, L. J., & Hartless, G. (2001). The influence of family and community social capital on educational achievement. *Rural Sociology*, 66(1), 43–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1549-0831.2001.TB00054.X>
- Jeynes, W. H. (2002). *Divorce, family structure, and the academic success of children*. Routledge. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=1099068>

- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). Effects of parental involvement and family structure on the academic achievement of adolescents. *Marriage & Family Review*, 37(3), 99–116.  
[https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v37n03\\_06](https://doi.org/10.1300/J002v37n03_06)
- Jezierski, S., & Wall, G. (2019). Changing understandings and expectations of parental involvement in education. *Gender and Education*, 31(7), 811–826.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1332340>
- Kalkan, U., Altinay Aksal, F., Altinay Gazi, Z., Atasoy, R., & Dagli, G. (2020). The relationship between school administrators' leadership styles, school culture, and organizational image. *SAGE Open*, 10(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020902081>
- Kimmel, M. (2017). *Manhood in America*. Oxford University Press.
- Kolaj-Robin, O., Russell, D., Hayes, K. A., Pembroke, J. T., & Soulimane, T. (2015). Cation diffusion facilitator family: Structure and function. *FEBS Letters*, 589(12), 1283–1295.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.febslet.2015.04.007>
- Kreidl, M., Štípková, M., & Hubatková, B. (2017). Parental separation and children's education in a comparative perspective: Does the burden disappear when separation is more common? *Demographic Research*, 36, 73–110. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26332126>
- Lamidi, E. (2016). *A quarter century of change in nonmarital births, family profiles* (FP-16-03). National Center for Family & Marriage Research, Bowling Green State University.  
<https://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/lamidi-nonmarital-births-fp-16-03.html>
- Lamidi, E., & Manning, W. D. (2016). *Marriage and cohabitation experiences among young adults*. National Center for Family and Marriage Research, Bowling Green State University. [https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ncfmr\\_family\\_profiles/60](https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ncfmr_family_profiles/60)

- Landers-Potts, M., Wickrama, K., Simons, L. G., Gibbons, F., & Conger, R. (2015). An extension and moderational analysis of the family stress model. *Family Relations*, 64, 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12117>
- Laslett, P., & Wall, R. (Eds.). (1972). *Household and family in past time: Comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan, and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Laursen, L. L., Madsen, K. B., Obel, C., & Hohwu, L. (2019). Family dissolution and children's social well-being at school: A historic cohort study. *BMC Pediatrics*, 19(1), 449–458. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12887-019-1821-z>
- Lazaridou, A., & Gravani Kassida, A. (2015). Involving parents in secondary schools: Principals' perspectives in Greece. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 29(1), 98–114. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-06-2013-0102>
- Lebow, J. L. (2020). The challenges of COVID-19 for divorcing and post-divorce families. *Family Process*, 59(3), 967–973. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12574>
- Lee, J., Kubik, M. Y., Fulkerson, J. A., Kohli, N., & Garwick, A. E. (2020). The identification of family social environment typologies using latent class analysis: Implications for future family-focused research. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 26(1), 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1074840719894016>
- Lehrer, E., & Son, Y. (2017). Women's age at first marriage and marital instability in the United States: Differences by race and ethnicity. *Demographic Research*, 37, 229–250. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26332196>

- Lim, E., Davis, J., Choi, S. Y., & Chen, J. J. (2019). Effect of sociodemographics, health-related problems, and family structure on chronic absenteeism among children. *Journal of School Health*, 89(4), 308–318. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1111%2Fjosh.12736>
- Lin, Y. C., Washington-Nortey, P. M., Hill, O. W., & Serpell, Z. N. (2019). Family functioning and not family structure predicts adolescents' reasoning and math skills. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28(10), 2700–2707. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01450-4>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). Expectancy theory of motivation: Motivating by altering expectations. *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*, 15(1).
- Mac Iver, M., Epstein, J., Sheldon, S., & Fonseca, E. (2015). Engaging families to support students' transition to high school: Evidence from the field. *The High School Journal*, 99(1), 27–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44075331>
- Magnuson, K., & Berger, L. M. (2009). Family structure states and transitions: Associations with children's wellbeing during middle childhood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 71(3), 575–591. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2009.00620.x>
- Makgato, M., & Mudzanani, N. N. (2019). Exploring school principals' leadership styles and learners' educational performance: A perspective from high-and low-performing schools. *Africa Education Review*, 16(2), 90–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18146627.2017.1411201>
- Malik, S. H. (2012). A study of relationship between leader behaviours and subordinates job expectancies: A path goal approach. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce & Social Sciences*, 6(2), 357-371.



- Malley, A. M., Walther, C. S., & Nichols, K. (2020). The demography of marriage and family: A history. In D. N. Farris & A. J. J. Bourque (Eds.), *International handbook on the demography of marriage and the family* (pp. 11–22). Springer Publishing.
- Mannan, G., & Blackwell, J. (1992). Parent involvement: Barriers and opportunities. *The Urban Review*, 24(3), 219–226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01108494>
- Martin, M. J., Conger, R. D., Schofield, T. J., Dogan, S. J., Widaman, K. F., Donnellan, M. B., & Neppl, T. K. (2010). Evaluation of the interactionist model of socioeconomic status and problem behavior. *Development and Psychopathology*, 22, 695–709. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0954579410000374>
- Mayer, S. (1997). *What money can't buy: Family income and children's life chances*. Harvard University Press.
- McDowall, P. S., Taumoepeau, M., & Schaughency, E. (2017). Parent involvement in beginning primary school: Correlates and changes in involvement across the first two years of school in a New Zealand sample. *Journal of School Psychology*, 62, 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.03.001>
- McLoyd, V. C., Jocson, R. M., & Williams, A. B. (2016). Linking poverty and children's development: Concepts, models, and debates. In D. Brady & L. M. Burton (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the social science of poverty* (pp. 141–165). Oxford University Press.
- Mernitz, S. (2018). A cohort comparison of trends in first cohabitation duration in the United States. *Demographic Research*, 38(66), 2073–2086. <https://doi.org/10.4054/demres.2018.38.66>

- Miller, G. H. (2020). Future trends in marriage and family. In D. N. Farris & A. J. J. Bourque (Eds.), *International handbook on the demography of marriage and the family* (pp. 307–315). Springer Publishing.
- Mitchell, C., McLanahan, S., Notterman, D., Hobcraft, J., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Garfinkel, I. (2015). Family structure instability, genetic sensitivity, and child well-being. *American Journal of Sociology*, 120(4), 1195-1225. <https://doi.org/10.1086/680681>
- Moehling, C. M. (2004). Family structure, school attendance, and child labor in the American south in 1900 and 1910. *Explorations in Economic History*, 41(1), 73–100.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.eeh.2003.07.001>
- Monte, L. M. (2019). Multiple-partner fertility in the United States: A demographic portrait. *Demography*, 56(1), 103–127. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0743-y>
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage Publications.
- Mowen, T. J. (2017). The collateral consequences of “criminalized” school punishment on disadvantaged parents and families. *The Urban Review*, 49(5), 832–851.  
[doi:10.1007/s11256-017-0423-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0423-z)
- Murray, K. W., Finigan-Carr, N., Jones, V., Copeland-Linder, N., Haynie, D. L., & Cheng, T. L. (2014). Barriers and facilitators to school-based parent involvement for parents of urban public middle school students. *SAGE Open*, 4(4).  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014558030>
- Myers, S. M., & Myers, C. B. (2015). Family structure and school-based parental involvement: A family resource perspective. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 36(1), 114–131.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-014-9409-0>

- Neppl, T. K., Senia, J. M., & Donnellan, M. B. (2016). Effects of economic hardship: Testing the family stress model over time. *Journal of Family Psychology, 30*, 12–21.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000168>
- Nicoll, W. G. (2014). Developing transformative schools: A resilience-focused paradigm for education. *International Journal of Emotional Education, 6*(1), 47–65.  
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1085706>
- Noguera, P. A. (2003). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education, 38*(4), 431–459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085903038004005>
- Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Nye, I. (1952). Adolescent-parent adjustment: Age, sex, sibling number, broken homes, and employed mothers as variables. *Marriage and Family Living, 14*(3), 327–332.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/348725>
- O'Donnell, A. M. (2012). *Constructivism*. In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, T. Urdan, C. B. McCormick, G. M. Sinatra, & J. Sweller (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook, Vol. 1: Theories, constructs, and critical issues* (pp. 61–84). American Psychological Association.
- O'Malley, M., Voight, A., Renshaw, T. L., & Eklund, K. (2015). School climate, family structure, and academic achievement: A study of moderation effects. *School Psychology Quarterly, 30*(1), 142–157. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000076>
- Obama, M. O., Akinyi, L. E., & Orodho, J. A. (2016). Principals' leadership style and students' academic performance in public secondary schools in HomaBay County, Kenya.

- Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(7), 2224–5766.
- <http://repository.rongovarsity.ac.ke/handle/123456789/666>
- Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U. S. \_\_\_\_ (2015). [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556\\_3204.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/14-556_3204.pdf)
- Okeze, W. O., Ekekwe, J. U., & Uwaoma, C. O. (2018). Influence of leadership styles of principals on the academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Abia State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Applied Management and Social Sciences*, 15.
- Olowoselu, A., Mohamad, M. A. B., & Aboudahr, S. M. F. M. (2019). Path-goal theory and the application in educational management and leadership. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, 2(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.02.02.77>
- Parker, K., & Horowitz, J. M. (2015). Parenting in America: Outlook, worries, aspirations are strongly linked to financial situation. [http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/12/2015-12-17\\_parenting-in-america\\_FINAL.pdf](http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/12/2015-12-17_parenting-in-america_FINAL.pdf)
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage Publishing, Inc.
- Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2018). *Future ready PA index*. <https://futurereadypa.org/>
- Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2020). *Enrollment reports and projections*. [https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Enrollment Reports and Projections.aspx](https://www.education.pa.gov/Data-and-Statistics/Pages/Enrollment%20Reports%20and%20Projections.aspx)
- Perelli-Harris, B., & Gassen, N. S. (2012). How similar are cohabitation and marriage? Legal approaches to cohabitation across Western Europe. *Population and Development Review*, 38(3), 435–467. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2012.00511.x>

- Peterson, G. W., & Bush, K. R. (2013). *Handbook of marriage and the family* (3rd ed.). Springer.
- Pilgrim, N. A., Ahmed, S., Gray, R. H., Sekasanvu, J., Lutalo, T., Nalugoda, F., & Wawer, M. J. (2015). Multiple sexual partnerships among female adolescents in rural Uganda: The effects of family structure and school attendance. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 27(3), 319–328. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2014-0032>
- Pinquart, M. (2016). Associations of parenting styles and dimensions with academic achievement in children and adolescents: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(3), 475–493. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9338-y>
- Pong, S., & Ju, D. (2000). The effects of change in family structure and income on dropping out of middle and high school. *Journal of Family Issues*, 21(2), 147–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251300021002001>
- Prime, H., Wade, M., & Browne, D. T. (2020). Risk and resilience in family well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Psychologist*, 75(5), 631–643. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000660>
- Pryor, E. T. (1972). Rhode Island family structure: 1875 and 1960. In P. Laslett & R. Wall (Eds.), *Household and family in past time: Comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe* (pp. 571–589). Cambridge University Press.
- Psacharopoulos, G., Collis, V., Patrinos, H. A., & Vegas, E. (2020). *Lost wages: The COVID-19 cost of school closures* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 9246). [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3601422](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3601422)

- Raley, R. K., & Sweeney, M. M. (2020). Divorce, repartnering, and stepfamilies: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 81–99.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12651>
- Randall, A. K., & Bodenmann, G. (2017). Stress and its associations with relationship satisfaction. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 13, 96–106.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.05.010>
- Razik, T. A., & Swanson, A. D. (2010). *Fundamental concepts of educational leadership and management* (3rd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Repetti, R. L., Taylor, S. E., & Seeman, T. E. (2002). Risky families: Family social environments and the mental and physical health of offspring. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 330–366. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.128.2.330>
- Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2019). The intersection of student engagement and families: A critical connection for achievement and life outcomes. In J. A. Fredricks, A. L. Reschly, & S. L. Christenson (Eds.), *Handbook of student engagement interventions* (pp. 57–71). Academic Press.
- Rodríguez Sánchez, A. (2019). *Family structure effects on U.S. children's well-being? Re-examining the family instability hypothesis*. Center for Open Science.  
[doi:10.31219/osf.io/84q56](https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/84q56)
- Roustit, C., Campoy, E., Renahy, E., King, G., Parizot, I., & Chauvin, P. (2011). Family social environment in childhood and self-rated health in young adulthood. *BMC Public Health*, 11, Article 949. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-11-949>

- Salzman, S. A. (1987, April). *Meta-analysis of studies investigating the effects of father absence on children's academic performance* [Paper presentation]. American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, United States.
- Santin, D. & Sicilia, G. (2016). Does family structure affect children's academic outcomes? Evidence for Spain. *The Social Science Journal*, 53(4), 555–557.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscij.2016.04.001>
- Schneider, D. (2017). The effects of the Great Recession on American families. *Sociology Compass*, 11(4), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12463>
- Schunk, D. (2016). *Learning theories: An educational perspective*. Pearson.
- Schwandt, T. (2007). *The role of practical knowledge in learning* [Paper presentation]. The 21st Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association, Baltimore, MD, United States.
- Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2017). Generation Z: Educating and engaging the next generation of students. *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience*, 22(3), 21–26.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002%2Fabc.21293>
- Shabazian, A. N. (2020). Voices that matter: Chief administrative officers' role in the student discipline gap. *Urban Education*, 55(1), 66–94.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916651319>
- Shatto, B., & Erwin, K. (2016). Moving on from millennials: Preparing for generation Z. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 47(6), 253. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20160518-05>

- Sheldon, S. B. (2007). Improving student attendance with school, family, and community partnerships. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 100(5), 267–275.  
<https://doi.org/10.3200/JOER.100.5.267-275>
- Shelleby, E. C. (2018). Economic stress in fragile families: Pathways to parent and child maladjustment. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27(12), 3877–3886.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-018-1232-z>
- Simons, L. G., Wickrama, K. A., Lee, T. K., Landers-Potts, M., Cutrona, C., & Conger, R. D. (2016). Testing family stress and family investment explanations for conduct problems among African American adolescents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 78(2), 498–515.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12278>
- Sire, J. (2009). *The universe next door*. InterVarsity Press Academic.
- Smith, T. W., Davern, M., Freese, J., & Morgan, S. L. (2019). *General social surveys, 1972-2018*. National Opinion Research Center.
- Smith, W. C. (1945). The stepchild. *American Sociological Review*, 10(2), 237–242.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2085642>
- Smock, P. J., & Schwartz, C. R. (2020). The demography of families: A review of patterns and change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 9–34.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12612>
- South, S. J., & Tolnay, S. (2019). *The changing American family: Sociological and demographic perspectives*. Routledge.
- Spruance, L. A., Esplin, J., Glover, A., & Haines, A. (2020). School administrators' attitudes toward the school breakfast program. *Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 15(2), 210–219. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19320248.2019.1599310>



- Stanfors, M., & Goldscheider, F. (2017). The forest and the trees: Industrialization, demographic change, and the ongoing gender revolution in Sweden and the United States, 1870–2010. *Demographic Research*, 36, 173–226. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26332129>
- Stanley v. Illinois, 405 U.S. 645 (1972). <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep405645/>
- Sun, Y., & Li, Y. (2009). Parental divorce, sibship size, family resources, and children's academic performance. *Social Science Research*, 38(3), 622–634. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2009.03.007>
- Sun, Y., & Li, Y. (2011). Effects of family structure type and stability on children's academic performance trajectories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 73(3), 541–556. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2011.00825.x>
- Sutherland, H. E. G. (1930). The relationship between IQ and size of family in the case of fatherless children. *The Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 38(1-4), 161–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856559.1930.10532258>
- Teachman, J., Tedrow, L., & Kim, G. (2013). The demography of families. In G. Peterson & K. Bush (Eds.), *Handbook of marriage and family* (pp. 39–51). Springer.
- Thomas, V., Muls, J., De Backer, F., & Lombaerts, K. (2019). Middle school student and parent perceptions of parental involvement: Unravelling the associations with school achievement and wellbeing. *Educational Studies*, 46(4), 404–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2019.1590182>
- Thompson, A. M., Herman, K. C., Stormont, M. A., Reinke, W. M., & Webster-Stratton, C. (2017). Impact of Incredible Years® on teacher perceptions of parental involvement: A latent transition analysis. *Journal of School Psychology*, 62, 51–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.03.003>

- Truebridge, S. (2016). Resilience: It begins with beliefs. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 52(1), 22–27.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2016.1123041>
- Turner, A. (2015). Generation Z: Technology and social interest. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 71(2), 103–113. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jip.2015.0021>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2018a). *Historical living arrangements of children*.  
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/chidren.html>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2018b). *Race and ethnicity*. Retrieved July 3, 2020, from  
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=05000000US42013%2CBlair+County%2C+Pennsylvania>
- U. S. Census Bureau. (2018c). *Race and ethnicity*. Retrieved July 3, 2020, from  
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?q=Cambria%20County,%20Pennsylvania&g=05000000US42021&tid=ACSDP1Y2018.DP05>
- Umberson, D., & Thomeer, M. B. (2020). Family matters: Research on family ties and health, 2010 to 2020. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 404–419.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12640>
- Van Lancker, W., & Parolin, Z. (2020). COVID-19, school closures, and child poverty: A social crisis in the making. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(5), e243–e244.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(20\)30084-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(20)30084-0)
- Van Velsor, P., & Orozco, G. L. (2007). Involving low-income parents in the schools: Community centric strategies for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2156759X0701100103>

- Veesser, P. I., & Blakemore, C. W. (2006). Student assistance program: A new approach for student success in addressing behavioral health and life events. *Journal of American College Health*, 54(6), 377-381. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JACH.54.6.377-381>
- Viner, R. M., Russell, S. J., Croker, H., Packer, J., Ward, J., Stansfield, C., & Booy, R. (2020). School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: A rapid systematic review. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 4(5), 397–404. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30095-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30095-X)
- Vos, S. D. (2001). Family structure and school attendance among children 13-16 in Argentina and Panama. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 32(1), 99–115. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.32.1.99>
- Vroom, V. H. (2005). On the origins of expectancy theory. In K. G. Smith & M. A. Hitt (Eds.), *Great minds in management: The process of theory development* (pp. 239–258). Oxford University Press.
- Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. Wiley.
- Wagmiller, R. L., Jr., Gershoff, E., Veliz, P., & Clements, M. (2010). Does children's academic achievement improve when single mothers marry? *Sociology of Education*, 83(3), 201–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0038040710375686>
- Wallerstein, J. S., & Lewis, J. (1998). The long-term impact of divorce on children: A first report from a 25-year study. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 36(3), 368–383. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.174-1617.1998.tb00519.x>
- Weber v. Aetna Casualty & Surety Co., 406 U. S. 164 (1972). <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep406/usrep406164/usrep406164.pdf>

- Whitchurch, G. G., & Constantine, L. L. (1993). Systems theory. In P. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 325–352). Springer Publishing.
- Wilcox, W. B. (2002). For the sake of the children: Family-related discourse and practice in the mainline. In R. Wuthnow & J. H. Evans (Eds.), *The quiet hand of God: Faith-based activism and the public role of mainline Protestantism* (pp. 287–316). University of California Press.
- Williams, A. B. (2016). Linking poverty and children's development. In D. Brady & L. M. Burton (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of the social science of poverty* (pp. 141–170). Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199914050.013.8
- Williams, J. A., III, Lewis, C., Starker Glass, T., Butler, B. R., & Hoon Lim, J. (2020). The discipline gatekeeper: Assistant principals' experiences with managing school discipline in urban middle schools. *Urban Education*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042085920908913>
- Williamson, B., Eynon, R., & Potter, J. (2020). Pandemic politics, pedagogies, and practices: Digital technologies and distance education during the coronavirus emergency. *Learning, Media, and Technology*, 45(2), 107–114.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2020.1761641>
- Winkler, A. (2012). *Home front U.S.A.: America during World War II*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Wolf, S., & McCoy, D. C. (2019). Household socioeconomic status and parental investments: Direct and indirect relations with school readiness in Ghana. *Child Development*, 90(1), 260–278. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12899>

- World Value Survey. (2017). *Online data analysis*. <http://www.worldvaluesurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>
- Wu, L. L., & Martinson, B. C. (1993). Family structure and the risk of a premarital birth. *American Sociological Review*, 58, 210–232. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095967>
- Yamamoto, J. K., Gardiner, M. E., & Tenuto, P. L. (2014). Emotion in leadership: Secondary school administrators' perceptions of critical incidents. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 42(2), 165–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213499260>
- Yu, M., & Vinitwatanakhun, W. (2016). A comparative study of educational administrators' leadership styles in three types of universities in China: Normal University, University of Science and Technology, and Medical University. *Scholar: Human Sciences*, 8(1), 14–27. <http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/Scholar/article/view/2182/1531>
- Zito, R. C. (2015). Family structure history and teenage cohabitation: Instability, socioeconomic disadvantage, or transmission? *Journal of Family Issues*, 36(3), 299–325. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X13490933>

**APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER****LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 30, 2021

Brian Randall  
Kenneth Tierce

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-698 School Administrators' Leadership Practices With Non-Nuclear Families: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Brian Randall, Kenneth Tierce:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) 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 the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). 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:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**

**APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT SITE APPROVAL**

**[External] Re: Potential Participation in Study**

[REDACTED]

Wed 3/31/2021 8:16 AM

To: Randall, Brian <[REDACTED]@liberty.edu>

Hello,

Yes. You can contact them. Thank you

On Tue, Mar 30, 2021 at 9:29 PM Randall, Brian <[REDACTED]@liberty.edu> wrote:

[REDACTED]

Good Evening! As mentioned in my previous email, I am a student at Liberty University, and I would like to include your school district in my study. This study is to satisfy the dissertation on requirement for my program. I am also a teacher at [REDACTED] so I could conduct the study in person or virtually. At this me, I am asking your **permission to contact your high school administrators** to see if they would be interested in being interviewed for my study.

Thank you for your me and consideration on!

Yours in Education,

Brian Randall

Liberty University

**APPENDIX C: SCREENING SURVEY FOR PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

Dear Potential Research Participant,

Your school district has agreed to participate in a study on family structure and educational outcomes from a school administrator's perspective. Participants will be selected from your school district based on this survey. If you are interested in participating in the study, please fill out the survey and email it to the researcher, Brian Randall, at [brandall3@liberty.edu](mailto:brandall3@liberty.edu). The information gathered in this document is to ensure a diverse sample size and is not a part of data collection. If you are not selected, your information will be discarded.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School District: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of Experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

**Title of the Project:** School Administrators' Leadership Practices with Non-Nuclear Families: A Phenomenological Study

**Principal Investigator:** Brian Randall, Doctoral Student, Liberty University

### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a school administrator in Pennsylvania with at least 5 years of high school experience and have knowledge of parental investment and family structure. Participation in this research project is voluntary. Please take the time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

### **What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to describe the shared experiences of school administrators at Central Pennsylvania high schools with parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families. The study will analyze parental barriers and how school administrators use different leadership practices to address those barriers.

### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

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

1. Participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher that would require about 60-90 minutes which would be audio recorded.
2. Possibly participate in a focus group based on responses to the interview questions to discuss experiences with the parental investment of non-nuclear families (90 minutes) which would be audio recorded.
3. Complete a writing prompt that focuses on experiences and beliefs (30 minutes).
4. Review their interview transcript to ensure accuracy (10 minutes).

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include a better understanding of parents' barriers from non-nuclear families and leadership practices that are perceived as useful for addressing these barriers.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms for the participant and the school district. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations or papers. After 3 years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for 3 years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your school/district in which you administrate. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address and phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Brian Randall. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Randy Tierce, at [REDACTED].

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

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](mailto:irb@liberty.edu)

<b>Your Consent</b>
---------------------

By signing this document, you agree to participate in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

**APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT LETTER (EMAIL)**

Dear [Recipient]:

My name is Brian Randall. As a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families from the perspective of a school administrator, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be a school administrator in Pennsylvania and have at least 5 years of high school experience and have knowledge of parental investment and family structure. If selected, participants will be asked to participate in a 60- to 90-minute individual interview with the researcher that will be audio recorded, respond to a writing prompt (30 minutes), and review the transcript of the interview (10 minutes). Participants may be selected for a focus group (90 minutes) depending on their experiences which will also be audio recorded. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. Each participant and school district will be provided with a pseudonym.

If you are interested in participating, please complete the attached screening survey and email it to me to schedule an interview. If you meet the inclusion criteria, you will be emailed a consent document that you will need to sign and return prior to the start of the study, and an interview time will be scheduled at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Brian Randall  
Liberty University Doctoral Student

██████████ / ██████████

**APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT FOLLOW-UP LETTER (EMAIL)**

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. Two weeks ago, I sent you an email inviting you to participate in a research study. I am sending this follow-up email to remind you to respond if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for consideration is [Date].

If you meet the inclusion criteria, you will be asked to participate in a 60- to 90-minute individual interview with the researcher which will be audio recorded, respond to a writing prompt (30 minutes), and review the transcript of the interview (10 minutes). Participants may be selected for a focus group (90 minutes) depending on their experiences which would also be audio recorded. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential. Each participant and school district will be provided with a pseudonym to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.

If you are interested in participating please complete the attached screening survey and email it to me to schedule an interview. If you meet the inclusion criteria, you will be emailed a consent document that you will need to sign and return prior to the start of the study, and an interview time will be scheduled at your convenience.

Sincerely,  
Brian Randall  
Liberty University Doctoral Student

## **APPENDIX G: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Standardized Open-Ended Individual Interview Questions**

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another and how you became an administrator.
2. What does parental investment look like to you? (CRQ)
3. What challenges have you experienced with parental investment from a non-nuclear background? (CRQ)
4. In your experience, what impact does parental investment barriers have on non-nuclear families? (CRQ)
5. What have you experienced as barriers that exist at home for non-nuclear parents to help their child with homework? Furthermore, how has the school helped with those challenges? (SQ1 & SQ2)
6. What have your experiences in the form of time, cultural differences, or familiarity with the school system that was an issue for non-nuclear parents? (SQ1 & SQ3)
7. What barriers exist for non-nuclear families that nuclear families do not encounter? (CRQ)
8. How does family structure play a role in parental investment in social settings such as extracurriculars or parent-teacher conferences? (SQ1)
9. What experiences have you had with how parents from non-nuclear households feel about the school or expectations compared to traditional families? (SQ2)
10. What are parental expectations you have experienced from non-nuclear families? (SQ1 & SQ2)
11. How does parental motivation impact parental investment specifically for non-nuclear families? (SQ2)

12. In your experiences, when assisting non-nuclear families and their children, how does providing specific expectations to the parents or child help the child become successful?  
(SQ3)
13. How does the school promote positive parenting or home–school collaboration? (SQ3)
14. How can you improve parental investment in your current role? (SQ3)
15. How are non-nuclear parents included in school decision-making processes, and in your opinion are there barriers that exists restricting non-nuclear parents' ability to be included?  
(SQ3)
16. How prepared are you to lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers?  
(SQ3)
17. Reflecting on your career as an administrator, what advice would you give to parents on how they can be invested in their child's education, both academically and socially? (CQ)
18. What else would you like for me to understand as I study school administrators' experiences with the parental investment of non-nuclear families? (CQ)

## **APPENDIX H: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

### **Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions**

1. Tell us your name, how long you have worked as a school administrator, and your reasons for participating in this study.
2. Think back to your formal training and subsequent transition into your role as a school administrator. What do you feel prepared you the most for the challenges you would face?
3. What barriers do you see as a school administrator that parents from a non-nuclear family structure face?
4. How have you experienced parental investment barriers of non-nuclear families?
5. How does parental motivation impact parental investment for non-nuclear families?
6. How do you lead non-nuclear families through parental investment barriers?
7. What barriers have you experienced personally in your role that hinder your ability to assist non-nuclear families?
8. What would you change about the educational system to help parents from a non-nuclear family structure, and why?



## APPENDIX I: WRITING PROMPT EMAIL

Dear [Participant]:

Thank you for your participation in this study. The last aspect of the study involves responding to three writing prompt questions. Please read the questions below and respond to each with at least one paragraph. You can then email your responses back to me at brandall3@liberty.edu.

Thank you in advance for your continued participation.

### Questions

1. When you find out that a student comes from a non-nuclear family structure, how do you feel, what do you think, and what assumptions do you make?
2. In your experiences, how does family structure, specifically coming from a non-nuclear family, impact a parent's ability to invest in their child's education?
3. Throughout this study, we have talked about family structure and parental investment related to family structure from different aspects. How would you best summarize your leadership style in addressing barriers to parental investment of non-nuclear families?

Sincerely,

Brian Randall  
Liberty University Doctoral Student

**APPENDIX J: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPTION**Transcription details:

Date: 10-Jun-2021

Coded Name: Jake Yates

Transcription results:

[silence]

S1: 00:13 Okay.

S2: 00:14 For me, it's, it's, it's, it's relationships. Right? So somewhere along the line there's been a relationship with this kiddo but it's broken down, and there's been a loss of the trust factor there. Right? So what we need to do here to be able to get this kid to trust us, or to even want to, is to be able to build a relationship with that kid. And that's what I think that I do. That's my job is to build relationships with kids. And, uh, I think it's also my job to help teachers build relationship with kids. And so a lot of times teachers wanna present information. You learn the information, you take a test on Friday, we move on. And, you know, when you have those, there-there's trust issues immediately with kids with them because, like I said, there was a close relationship that was somehow broken down. Sometimes it's not, you know, anybody's fault. Maybe there's death. Right? Sometimes it's divorce where somebody cheated on somebody and they saw that trust broken down. Um, you know, and a lot of times kids don't even really know what happened. It might've

happened really young in life. Th-th-they don't know but they, they still have those feelings going on.

So it's if, if we can create good, strong relationships and create that trust.

And, uh, the one thing that I think really helps building relationships is just listening to kids. Just listen to them for a couple minutes and hear what they have to say. And so many times I, I, I had-- discipline and attendance are my two main job-- you know, duties here. Um, but at least when kids are in the building. And, um, you know, s-so many th-- they just need to be heard out a lot of the times. And a lot of the times discipline issues having nothing to do with what's going on. Teachers try to take those things personality from time to time. And a lot of times it's something's that going on, you know, at home, or something's going on, mom and dad are fighting, there's a new court case coming up. There could be a, a, a, a million different reasons. But it rarely is actually what's going on in the classroom.

S1: 02:12 All right. So you're gung-ho, I like that. [laughter]

S2: 02:16 Yeah.

S1: 02:16 Um, please introduce yourself to me as if we just met one another in how you become an administrator.

S2: 02:21 My name is Jake Yates. Um, I, um, started coaching football, um, in the late '90s. Uh, I became a football coach a-and did that kind of part time for a little bit. I went back and got my teaching degree. Um, I ended up, um, getting it. I was a technology education teacher. I went to the

University of California and Pennsylvania. Um, I, I got a full-time position at Adams High School, which is a, a high school very close to here, neighboring district; ridiculously different demographics. Um, 93% free and reduced lunch. Um, one of the biggest barriers down there was, um, uh, student turnover. Uh, 30% of the kids, um, either do not graduate from that school that started there or, um, m-move in and out. And but the numbers stay the same. So it's just a constant turnover of kids. Um, I was there for 10 years, or 12 years. Um, and, um, it was just time for me, uh, to-- a-as I grew and grew and grew in my profession, it was time to become a leader. I decided to go back in my administrative papers. Um, right, uh, uh, right as I was graduating, a job opened up here. Um, I had coached football at this district before, uh, has some preexisting relationships. Uh, and, uh, I interviewed and got lucky enough to come back he-- to come back here. And I feel very at home here. I've been here for-- I started in Thanksgiving in 2019. So I've been here for, I guess, a year and a half, really.

S1: 04:00 Yeah.

S2: 04:00 Yeah. This past school year is my first full school year as administrator. But with the remote instruction in the middle of the year and things like that it still feel like I've had a, a full normal year in, you k-- you know--

S1: 04:11 Yeah.

S2: 04:11 --in, in my short administrative term anyway.

S1: 04:15 So, uh, what about your family background? Um, married? Have kids?

- S2: 04:20 Sure. I, um, I was a-- I, I had a-- my, my oldest son is 25; I'm 42. Um, he was born when I was 17 years old. I always tell people he was born three days after my last, uh, high school football game. Um, I played on a Saturday. He was born on Tuesday, November 2nd.
- S1: 04:36 Okay.
- S2: 04:36 Uh, and, um, yeah, it really changes your perspective. Uh, it also helps me connect with kids who have issues. I, I, I-- not that I use it, but I definitely am not afraid to tell people my story. And, you know what I mean? And, you know, that, you know, things happen to everybody. And you will overcome and you will-- eventually, you're gonna be all right. You just need to keep working through it. And it helps me connect with kids a lot, letting them know that I, you know, I was a teenage father. And, uh, so, um, I got married five years later I got divorced to, you know, um, my, my son's mom. Um, I had another child. Uh, she's 14. Um, her and her, um-- hmm, her, her and-- uh, her mother and I are separated as well. We were never married. Um, I am now married. I've been married for eight years and, um, I have a stepdaughter to my current wife, and we have two children. So I have five kids who range from, uh, 25 to 2.
- S1: 05:39 Okay. So you got younger ones too?
- S2: 05:41 Yes.
- S1: 05:42 Okay.

- S2: 05:42 Yes. So I have the 25-year-old, a 14-year-old. Um, my stepdaughter who's gonna 9 here in two weeks. And I have a 3 and a 2-year-old.
- S1: 05:53 Okay. I got a, a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old and I had a 6-month-old.
- S2: 05:58 Okay.
- S1: 05:58 So I feel your pain.
- S2: 05:59 So yes, yeah, you're right there. [laughter] We were just talking about potty training. We're trying to get, uh, my, my son-- th-they're pretty-- doing pretty well, but he has no desire to poop on the potty whatsoever. And he just goes in a corner and, and, yeah.
- S1: 06:11 Well, if you figure that out let me know. [laughter]
- S2: 06:12 That's-- oh, y-you too. You too. [laughter] Yes, good luck.
- S1: 06:16 Yeah. Um, so what does parental investment look like to you?
- S2: 06:21 Parental investment?
- S1: 06:22 Yeah.
- S2: 06:22 What do you mean by that?
- S1: 06:25 W-what does it mean to you first? Parental investment.
- S2: 06:32 If how invested as a parent you are in your-- in your kiddos. I-i-is that-- um, yeah. I, I, I think it's different for everybody. Right? Everybody's families is a little bit different. And I, I, I think, um, um, you know, different parents are invested in their kids in different ways. Right? Stay-at-home moms are invested different in their kids than working moms are. Not bad, or worse, or different, or, you know, better or worse, but just different.

- S1: 06:56                    Hmm.
- S2: 06:56                    Um, I, I think the same thing goes with dads. Right? I, I mean, this job, I, I probably push, you know, 50 hours a week, something like that. You know, I have basketball games and football games. And, you know, I- I've missed a lot of events as a football coach and a teacher. Um, you know, when, when my son was in, in high school playing soccer and, you know, he had a game on the Tuesday at 4 o'clock, I was in football practice with other people's kids. Um, you know, so. Um, but he understood that. That's who I was. It's-- you know, it, it helped me make a-- I was a better dad for him because of the relationships I was able to build with the kids as a football coach. So, um, I, I, I think it's very different. Um, but I-- for everybody, depending on their situation.
- S1: 07:38                    Mm-hmm. So whenever we look at the two words, parental investment and parental involvement, do you think they're related? Do you think they're the same? Do you think they're fundamentally different?
- S2: 07:55                    Yeah. Because, you know, uh, um, I've, I've heard the term, uh, you know, it's-- uh, and then, too, it can-- can be for moms too. But I've heard the term like Disney Dads. Right? So sometimes, you know, parents get separated and one of them is like the, you know, the taking care of food and shelter and clothing and this. You know, with, with the separated parents, the other one swoops in every other weekend and takes them to the playground or in the zoo or whatever. And--
- S1: 08:20                    Yeah.

S2: 08:20 --are you really-- and are you involved with your kid by taking them places and showing up at their basketball game and, a-and cheering loudest in the stands? Are you invested in your kid, you know, where you're providing food, clothing, shelter, water, you know, the love. And not only that, the discipline side of that too. Whether you're the-- you're the one, you know, having to take care of the not just the good times, but the bad times as well. A-and I've seen those sides of that as well, is that, you know, um, with this-- you w-- you know, when you talk about non-nuclear family, I'm about as non-nuclear as they get - you know what I mean? - with, you know-- um, uh, I have, you know, with our-- just my stepdaughter. My wife's stepdaughter, my, my daughter, you know, living in our house and then we have two kids, you know, together, and then I have an older son who's 25, I mean, we're about as non-nuclear as it gets. And we see both sides of that, um, just, just in our family. So yeah. I definitely think there's-- you know, can you be invested - can you be involved in your kids without being invested? Yes, absolutely. I also see that in social media too. Right? Y-you know, um, you, you can look involved or invested with your kids with a whole bunch of social media posts but we're really not with-- know what's going on in their lives or really being invested in them as human beings.

S1: 09:32 Okay. And do you, in your role, kind of see behind that veil?

S2: 09:37 Yeah, yeah. There-- I get to see a lot behind the curtain that teachers don't get to see. Hmm, a lot of it because of time. Right? They're a



teacher for 42 minutes, they have 4-minute-- they teach for 42 minutes.

You know, and where, um, I have-- um, you know, w-when I talk to the parents, a lot of the times a lot of this information comes out. Um, I pride myself-- um, i-i-in our school district, straight across the hall from, from the main office here is the guidance office. I'm over there. We have two school counselors and a social worker. I'm over on that side of the office w-- during the school year as much if not more, um, than I'm even in my own office. Um, most of my discipline issues, most of my attendance issues start over there. Um, you know, because like I said, they're not the issues that the teachers are seeing in the classroom.

Teachers see class disruptions, the teachers can see the kid making a joke in class or trying to bring attention to themselves from, from some other way. And then we find out that, you know, maybe dad is sick or the parents are gonna get a divorce or the, the, the kid is having, you know, some sort of other mental health problem, you know, that could be anything from an eating disorder, to cutting. The, you know, the, the teachers are seeing the kids 42 minutes, so ha-ha-has no idea about-- and a lot of that stuff comes out. Um, so I do-- I actually would go over with the counselors and talk to kids over there. My office as assistant principal sometimes feels like the I-got-in-trouble office. Right? This is where I'm dealing out detention. This is where I'm dealing out suspension. And sometimes I wanted to feel like that. But when I don't need it to feel like that, a lot of times I'll go over the guidance office and

I'll have conversations with kids over there just to try to take a little bit of that stigma at what can be the assistant principal's office.

S1: 11:24            So what challenges have you experienced with parental investment for a non-nuclear background?

S2: 11:33            Probably the, the, the biggest one i-is just communication. Right? A, a lot of times there's, there's one parent who is, you know, the, the, the go-to parent in th-- in this non-nuclear, where it might be grandma, it might be mom, it might be dad. Um, i-it's never consistent. Um, you know, but-- and then trying to communicate, you know, to the other side where you might be leaving voicemails or you might be sending letters. And then all of a sudden a big problem pops up and they're like, "Well, why didn't I know about this?" And we're like, "Well, we emailed you. We called you." You, you know? Um, we, we have a disconnected phone number, you know, that it was never updated on the last one. And that might not-- sometimes it's, uh, you know, th-those forms went home and the, the kid was at mom's house and mom filled out all the emergency contact stuff and dad didn't even get on it, or the other way around. Dad got all the stuff or grandma got the stuff and didn't put these people on it. Communication, um, i-is, i-is a major barrier. Um, a-and, a-and that's probably second to getting-- to building that trust where kids can tell you the truth, and where kids would just tell you really what's going on i-i-in their lives. And, um, a-and really what the problem is behind the problem. Um, 'cause a lot of times we're dealing with symptoms and,

you know, a lot of times discipline issues are symptoms o-of, of a-- o-of a problem behind of what's really going on in a kiddos head.

S1: 13:03 In your experience, what impact does parental investment barriers have on non-nuclear families?

S2: 13:13 S-- read that one more time for me.

S1: 13:14 In your experience, what impact does parental investment barriers have on non-nuclear families?

S2: 13:20 Uh, it's, it's, it's trust and relationship-building. Right? Th-tho-those kiddos have-- the-they have trouble trusting people, number one, and without trust you don't have a relationship. So they're-- they immediately build up walls that, um, you know, you have to find ways, ways to tear down. And, uh, uh, I find listening and empathy to be the, the two things to overcome those barriers. But i-it-it's, um, i-i-it's really starts with trust, um, because they, like-- the-they've lost trust in adults at some point in their lives. And, uh, y-you gotta find ways to be able to build that back up and really, really be careful not to lose that trust. And when you tell them you're not gonna do something, make sure you don't do it. You tell them you do something, you're gonna do something and you make sure you follow through and do it. Because once you break that down again and you lose that relationship, i-it becomes a thousand times harder for you to, to bring it back.

S1: 14:19 What have you experienced as barriers that exist at home for non-nuclear parents to help with their child's homework?

S2: 14:27

A lot of times it's at two different houses. Right? "I, I left the paper at mom's house but I was at dad's house this weekend." Um, y-you know, things like that. "I was at grandma's over the weekend, we're here-- I-- book bag here, I-left things here." A lot of the times i-it's just simple little things like that. "I took this paper there but I, I left it here." Um, a, a lot of times it's just very simple. And then there's that communication at home where there-- these two people who have some sort of a relationship break down, they're not speaking or they're mad about something else i-in between. And a lot of times i-it's just having those, those two different homes that these kids live in. And w-when those communication barriers break down a-and you're talking about homework. And then you might have, you know, one parent who, um, s-says, you know-- or, you know, "I wanna see your homework. Let me--" you know, actually checking this stuff. And the other one is just, "Hey, did you do your homework tonight?" "Yeah, I did my homework tonight." They didn't do their homework. You k-- you know what I mean? Because they know they can get along w-- away with these things on one house but they can't get away with another. And you'll see even fluctuations in grades sometimes between, you know, two different places. For this week, it's good grades. That week, it's, i-it's bad grades. And that you can actually see those patterns sometimes.

S1: 15:36

So how can the school help with those challenges?

S2: 15:40

Building relationships, it's the same way. Right? Uh, you know what I mean? I-i-it's, it's a bi-- it's the most important thing we do. We need to build those relationships with both, both parents and stay on the side of the kid. Um, you know, and-- 'cause parents wanna drag you into their drama at times. Especially with divorced parents, boy, i-i-if-- yeah. I keep talking about that. It's probably the most common non-nuclear family. But, you know, the mom wants to tell you what the dad was doing wrong with the kid. The dad wants to tell you how crazy the mom is. And to stay-- I'm not here about that. I'm here for the kid and you need to be too. Um, a-- I think my life experiences-- and I don't mind telling parents about my life experience as well, helps me break down some of those barriers. Like I've been where you're at. I've been a single dad. I've been divorced. I-I've been out of these relationships. I'm dealing with a custody situation. I'm dealing with child support. I've dealt with those things in my own personal life. So I-- it helps me with parents when, when they know these things about me. And I don't mind sharing those things with, with them either, um, just because it helps me build those relationships that should build their trust with you. "I, I-- you can't understand what I'm going through." Then I say, "We're in this for your kiddo." Right? This isn't about punishing mom with the kid, and this isn't about punishing dad with the kid. Let's be in this for the kiddo.

- S1: 17:08                    So what have you experienced in the form of time, cultural differences, or familiarity with the school system that was an issue for non-nuclear parents?
- S2: 17:22                    Read me the list again, I'm sorry.
- S1: 17:24                    Well, le-let's just start with the first one, form of time.
- S2: 17:25                    Okay.
- S1: 17:26                    Uh, has time been an issue for non-nuclear parents?
- S2: 17:31                    I think so because, you know, a lot of times, you know, the time is limited if the-- if the kid is being split. You know what I mean? Um, you know, so y-you only have so much time with your kid. Fi-- a lot of times it's 50% or, or, or less. Um, a-and those things really impact the kid and they impact how much time they're willing to spend on homework and things that are out of-- out of school, um, you know. A-and then, you know, when you get to non-nuclear families where, you know, a lot of grandparents are raising kids today. Um, you know, they don't have the energy that young people have to, to sit there and-- you know, especially at the high school age, you know what I mean? And the kids are just kinda-- those kids seem to be a lot more on their own. They just go home to grandma's house, they go up in the room to do their thing. They'll come down to eat dinner and then go back to their room. And come to school when there's not-- you know, there's love there, right, but there's not that, you know, that relationship there that y-you'd have with mom and dad. Um, so yeah. You know, time is definitely a thing

but it's-- every situation is so different. It's hard to, you know, bucket any of those things together.

S1: 18:37 What about cultural differences?

S2: 18:47 That one's a little bit harder because a-a-at the end of the day whe-- o-o-- once you build a relationship with the kids, um, th-they're really the same. Um, a-and, and at their root-- they're, they're really the same. The kids would just wanna be loved, you know? And they're-- some kids are a little bit harder to break down but, you know, I-- the last was at-- we're 37%, you know-- uh, only 70% are white. The school is probably 98% white, um, you know. Are, are, are there differences in those things? Yeah, tons. But when you break down and, and really get to know the kid, kids are kids. Um, I, I don't find it-- uh, I, I think there's, you know, different ways you can build those relationships a-a-and connect with kids. But really, once you get down and you really build a relationship with them, um, I, I, I don't find a whole lot of difference i-i-in the kiddos culturally. It's just, um, the way they-- you know, there's different norms and different things that happen. But, um, I, I find at the e-end of the day you still have those trust, the, the same thing. Th-they lost trust in somebody along the way, and they-- you need to find ways to get to the-- get kids to trust you. And, uh, I think listening to them and empathizing with them i-is, is the best way to get to overcome those barriers.

S1: 20:16 And then what about familiarity with the school system?

S2: 20:21

Yeah. I, I, I think the biggest thing with th-that is the socioeconomic status o-of the household. The higher socioeconomic, the parents are very familiar with the school system. Right? They're usually good students. They usually went to college. They understand credits. They understand - you know what I mean? - um, chain of command, things like that. They kn-- they know who to start it with and how to climb their, their, their way up the ladder. They, they also understand a little bit better that, you know, i-if I'm calm and talk to people, a lot of the times I-- people are, are a little bit more willing to help. They can keep emotion out of the situation. And when you get in the lower socioeconomics that, that they have much less familiarity w-with the school system. Some, some of these people aren't even high school graduates themselves. Um, and when-- you know, I, I think that has a whole lot to do with, you know, the socioeconomic status of parents really understanding what, what we're trying to do here. And as, you know, a person on the lower-- the lowest end here of the administrative ladder, I, I pride myself on being that person who if you're gonna call here angry and yelling, I'm gonna listen to you for a little while. And, um, you know, let you get it out and say, "Okay," and try to identify the problem. And I think that's what we can do to help tho-those parents who have less familiarity with, you know, what actually goes on or what is going on with their kiddo. And, um, and so. And again it's not really any different than kids. Right? Listen to them for a minute. Give them



some empathy. You know, understand that these people just feel bad dealing with their kids, for their kids and fighting for-- advocating for their kids, um, a-as much as they can.

S1: 22:08                    Okay. What barriers exist for non-nuclear families that nuclear families do not encounter?

S2: 22:21                    I, I, I think communication is probably the number one. I, I think nuclear families, there's, there's a lot more-- mom knows what's going with dad. Dad knows what's going on with mom. When there's a school event, when there's a field trip, when there's a piece of paper that needs to get turned back in and there's homework, there's communication there 'cause it's all in the same household. And, uh, wi-with non-nuclear families, um, y-you know, that communication breaks down for a variety of reasons. It might be the two households. It might be grandparents tend to feel like th-they get nervous about what they should get involved in sometimes. Uh, uh, especially with the older kids, especially even the transition to grandparent happened, uh, you know, at an older age, or some reason might be incarceration or something else like, like that. Um, that they, they, they feel almost like they're stepping on like a teenager's toes. I've had a lot of that with grandparents. And, and, um, you know, I, I think the biggest thing there is, is just communication from kid to parent and parent to parent, where you have that nuclear family all in one household would be you have everybody kinda knows more of what's going on. And where, with a non-nuclear, it

might be a story here. It might be a story there. Um, a-and things get little bit more convoluted.

S1: 23:34      Okay. How does family structure play a role in parental-- sorry. How does family structure play a role in parental investment in social settings like extracurriculars or parent-teacher conferences?

S2: 23:47      Yes. It, it, it can be tough for kiddos. Right? Things like senior nights, graduations, you know. Um, especially those public things, um, you know, where the kids are trying decide, doing my walking out with mom, dad, stepmom, stepdad. Am I walking out with just grandma? You know, trying not to hurt people's feelings. Maybe they just really wanna walk out with mom and dad, but the stepmom wants to be there, you know, different things like that. Um, so, so that public thing can-- it puts stress on the kiddos, you know, a-and that could hurt them in the classroom and other places. Um, you know, and then when you have parent-teacher conferences, you know, ho-ho-how those things go. You know, y-you see that from the whole gamut of that from people not showing up at all. Right? So, so a lot of that, the non-nuclear families, you have less involvement in, in things like parent-teacher conferences and communication.

And then you have, you know, the two parents who come in and are-- and disagree on educational decisions, things like just as simple as scheduling or, you know, um, whatever it might be. And, and then those arguments can roll into parent-teacher conferences, and then turns into,

again, not being about the kid. And, you know, I, I try to make sure that I make myself available for teachers if they feel like something that-- like that is coming on to help bring those parents back to, to, "This isn't about you" yeah, and focus that stuff on the kid. Um, so I think that, yeah, just the involvement and then the stress it puts on kids, like, "How do I handle the situation?" You have kids end up ha-ha-having to try to handle adults.

S1: 25:27 So kinda digging into that stress that puts on kids. You said about, like, seniors nights and graduations. Um, how do you guys help a kid through that?

S2: 25:40 Um, you know, it depends a lot of the-- there's been—there's been times where I had to walk kids out if they don't have any parent-parental involvement. And so, so many they don't wanna come out. I-I-I've walked in-into-- and d-done those things in senior nights. Um, I, I think the best thing we can do, um, is, um, just, just listen to them and hear them out, a-and then try to give them solutions to whatever it is going on. I, I really don't-- you know, a kid will come, you know, a-and like I said, maybe they'll get in trouble in class and they'll end up in my office, "What's going on?" "I've senior night coming up next week. And my dad wants to bring my stepmom, but my mom doesn't want my stepmom there." You know? And they-- and you find out, "Well, did you talk to any of them about that?" "No, not at all." And I'll give a call home and be like, "Hey, this is what your kid's telling me. I'm not asking

you to give me a solution, but I think it's a conversation you need to have with your kid when they-- when they get home. And this is the stress that's been put on him right now and manifested itself in this."

And, you know, and I can communicate-- I can help the kid be the communicator to the parent. And sometimes that's a hard thing to bring up to your parents. And you don't wanna hurt anybody's feelings, but at the same time it's supposed to be your night and, um, you know, that happens a lot. So I'll have kids that-- "Come on, why don't we--" I'll put the parent on speakerphone, "Hey, I have Johnny here in my office. You know, uh, this is what's going on in his head right now is that wh-- you know, just I, I wanna make you aware." You know, that's not a conversation maybe we need to have here on the-- uh, o-on the phone but, you know, it's a conversation that I can help maybe the kid get started with his parents.

S1: 27:20            So in those situations, would you say you're like a, a bridge of communication--

S2: 27:25            Yeah.

S1: 27:25            --between the two?

S2: 27:26            Absolutely. Yeah, I do that a lot.

S1: 27:28            Okay.

S2: 27:28            I do that a lot.

- S1: 27:32                   What experiences have you had with how parents from non-nuclear households feel about the school, or expectations, compared to the traditional families?
- S2: 27:45                   The, the same things. A lot of times it's like double communication. Right? So, you know, with, with the nuclear family, i-if I need to contact home for some reason, um, and every time I have a kid in my office, I, I, I ask myself if this was my kid, would I want-- would I want to know about what's going on right now. And 99.99% of the time the answer to that question is yes, so it's a phone call home. If I have kid sitting in that chair where you're at right now, a-a-at some point I'm, I'm calling their house to let them-- let the parent know what's going on. So with the non-nuclear families a lot of times, um, you know, if it's a single mom, it might be hard to get a hold of, you know, toward the day, or a single dad during the day, right? they're working all day. You know, the-- it might be this time I can't get a hold of them. Um, yeah, I'll make calls like that for-- i-in the evening time for those parents. Um, you know, the, the other thing is it might be double callups. Right? So if you ha-- you have a set of divorced parents, you know, I have to call mom first. And mom is like, "Oh yeah." Y-you know, and they react one way. And then you call dad and you're like, "Well, that wasn't bad," or whatever it is. And, you know, you're making two phone calls for one kid, um, you, you know a lot of times. And then, you know, grandparents are-- uh, you-- w-when your-- grandparents are just very different type of, you

know, guardians to deal with because they're, they're way more hesitant to act. And the-- and they're a little bit more standoffish a, a lot of times. And sometimes I find myself giving them the confidence to be able to step in and say, "And this is the problem and you can take care of it. You have the right to take care of it." Um, so because they're not sure what they should or couldn't do and, and things like that, that happens a lot with grandparents.

S1: 29:31 So, I mean, schools are an academic institution, but we also have a lot of social, uh--

S2: 29:37 Social-emotional learning, that's a buzzword in schools today. And I, I believed in that forever and they never put a, you know, a, a word on it. Social-emotional learning. You know what I mean? That's it's, it's probably been around for, for longer than I realized but it's a-- it's really the push right now. But i-it's something I, I really believe. And I'm-- I don't think you can sit in a math class and learn math when you have a zillion things going on in your head about home. Let's clear these things up. Let's help solve these problems. So at least we can compartmentalize it a little bit. You know what I mean? And we can't make that problem go away, but at least we can compartmentalize and just shove this thing aside if we talk about it a little bit, and then go do the math. But if all of those things are running in your head and the kid is staring out the window, they're, they're, you know, thinking about all the possibilities. And so many times when-- parents are afraid to tell their kids what's

going on, so. And the kids make up the worst possible case scenario you could ever imagine. They imagine the, the, the worst things ever. And you call home and you're like, "Hey, this stuff is going on in this kid's head." And, um, They're like "Awe no, it's not that, it's this." And the kid is like, "Well, I didn't know that you-- I didn't know that." And there's a communication break down there. So kinda be that communication bridge for kids. And then they're like, "Oh." Like, "You're good?" "Yeah." "Go back to math class." You, you know what I mean? A-and then we can get some math work done.

And, um, I, I open my office up to kids too. I'm like, you know, i-if you're sitting there and you find yourself and all these things are going on in your head. Your, your parents are getting divorced. A lot of times those divorce anniversaries, like, a, a year after dad left the house or a year after mom left the house, or a year after an accident-- um, we had a kid who-- um, hi-his, his mom was, was killed right in front of him.

And, um, the, the year anniversary that, that month. And it was just awful for him. You, you know what I mean? And so I'm like, "Look. Go to class, things start, y-you know, just rolling around in your head, just raise your hand, 'I need to go see Mr. Yates.' You can come here, you can talk. You come here, I'll sit you in my conference room behind me. You can sit by yourself." You know what I mean? "We're gonna limit it in time a little bit, right, 'cause we need to get you back." Sometimes you just need to clear your head up. And, um, you know, I, I try to make

myself and my office and, you know, the resources I have available.

And sometimes, you know, uh, one of the questions I always ask kids is, "Do you have a trusted adult here in school you can talk to?" And if not, I go around and introduce some-- as many people as I can that I-- you know what I mean? I take them over to the researcher worker, their, their school counselor. You know, myself, Mr. Ross, the, the principal here and just try to introduce them to people, and then talk to their teachers. And I'll call their-- every single one of their teachers and say, "Hey, look, I talked to this kid," or I'll go around in the teachers' room, "In fact this kid says he doesn't have a trusted adult here he can talk to. Try to put yourself out there." And so many of our teachers will. And I think it's really important for kids to have a trusted adult they can talk to at any level, whether it's a teacher, a counselor, a social worker and administrator.

S1: 32:42                    So if we look at that from parental expectations, do you think the parental expectations go out above and beyond academics and into the social-emotional? Do you think they start with social-emotional and then go ahead and take care of academics? Like where, where parental expectation, the one we're talking about, that's non-nuclear?

S2: 33:02                    The parental expectations of the kid or the school?

S1: 33:05                    Of the parents.

S2: 33:07                    The-- oh, I see what you're saying. Um, of the school? So the-- what do the parents expect from the school?



S1: 33:12

From the school.

S2: 33:14

Oh, yeah. I-it can be different. Right? 'Cause some parents are like, "Why are you involved in this?" You know? A-and some-- and then there's other parents who really appreciate all the help. Um, grandparents so appreciate the help. Um, they just want help. They don't know what to do. They're-- th-they, they seem-- you know, like I said, they're, they're less likely to make strict decisions or rash decisions. Th-they try to just let things go a little bit and hope they kinda take care of themselves, and that ends up snowballing things. Um, so, um, I-- i-i-it's, it's very different because, l-like I said, some people think you're too involved. Some people think you're not involved enough. Um, what definitely happens if there's not a direct line of communication over and over and over again and things blow up, they're like, "Well, where have you been for this?" So that's why, to me, when a kid's in my office, you're probably getting a phone call home, because I called you on this day, I emailed you on this day. I, I wanna have that look. We're in this together. And then I wanna build a team with the parent as well, like let's help your kid together. We're in this together. If we can take-- if I can help you get resources, you know-- a-and that's where it's so important. Our social worker here is absolutely amazing, and we're, we're so lucky to have her. If I can help you get resources, maybe there's a death in the family, maybe there are worse things, and they know the resources - they can help them help this kid - we can get that social-

emotional part so we can get to that learning. Right? 'Cause I think, you know, it's almost two things. It's like without this social-emotional, um, you're-- we're never gonna get to the learning. So let-let's get your resource to help you work like this and work with a team. Um, a-a-and I think when-- you know, and that's where this whole thing comes back to build relationships. Right? I'm building relationships with kids. I'm building relationships with teachers. And I'm building relationships in the community, which is parents. And, you know, the non-nuclear families are really the relationships that, that, that I work on building the, the most and trying to stay neutral in, in those type of things. Um.

S1: 35:14 So whenever you're offering those, those services where there's supports for those phone calls, um, are parents receptive to that?

S2: 35:24 Uh, not always. Not always. Some people are like, oh, you know-- um, we ha-- we had a student end up having to take her truancy court, um, call home. The-- you know, and COVID more and more students are remote learners, not doing any work at all. You know, and I called her up, "You're not getting work done again this week." And we're looking at five absences already, and I'm off labs since th-this week. You know, and she won't get out of bed, um, you know. You know, there's, there's resource-- I mean, this is-- I'm not gonna-- I can't diagnose her or anything like that but-- "There's resources that can help you with this." Maybe-- you know, do we need to get them to some sort of an inpatient care? What type of things-- and then, like, "Well, that's none of your

business." Then I am like, "Eh" You know what I mean? I'm like, "Man, you know, you're right. It's not any of my business, kind of, but at the same time your kid's not going to school and that is my business. And it's the law that I have to make sure your kid's going to school. And so, well then, you need to make sure your kid's going to school." So, like, either we work together as a team on this thing and help get your kid the thing or we end up in truancy court, and I'd rather do the first one. And they're like, "Well, I'll get her to do some schoolwork." When we get a couple of days of schoolwork out - you know what I mean? - and then we're right back. And, you know, a-a-and in that case in particular, we ended up in truancy court and end up on probation. Um, the kid ended up being retained. They're gonna fail for the year, doing a little bit of summer school and, you know, th-those were the failures. But at the same time, you know, I-I'm probably just as many if-- definitely way more successful when you call the parent up and that they just-- that they don't know what to do either. They know it's an issue, they just don't know what to do. And when you just start telling them all the resources that we have, and we have, you know, school days counseling. And, you know, um, we have people with family-base counseling who would come into your house and, you know, the-- um, th-there's places for, for grievance, for kids from loss of-- so many community resources around here, and we're lucky to have a social worker that knows all

those, where they connect kids and parents with the help they need, uh, to get that social-emotional part so we can get to the learning.

S1: 37:31 So that situation, uh, with that girl waiting truancy--

S2: 37:35 Mm-hmm.

S1: 37:36 --court, you go through and you do everything you can to help that child be successful a-and, and you still don't get that end result. Like how, how does that make you feel as an administrator?

S2: 37:51 Um, y-- s-- y-you can't dwell on that though. It makes you sad. You know what I mean? Um, it makes you sad. Especially once you get to really know the kids. Um, uh, e-- but, you know, the-- there's the sours, but then the sweets are sweeter. So you, you, you really have to concentrate on the sweets, like-- and so I think that's how you get through it. It--

S1: 38:24 Hmm.

S2: 38:24 If my concentration fell on all the sours, I wanna learn from the sours. Right? What could I have done differently. Right? Um, you know, a-and usually the answer to that is I, I could of listened a little bit longer and a little bit more. And just a lot of times people just need to get it out. And then, you know, okay, now what could-- what can we do to solve this? Uh, and, uh, a-a-and try to get them the help they need. Um, uh, I just-- I try to concentrate on the sweets, 'cause the sweets are really, really sweet. When you get a kid who are like, "Yeah." You know what I mean? Like, that conversation was really good, it really helped. We

talked to the parents who are coming back. The kids are doing good now. You know, and the kids to come back and like, "Hey, Mr. Mosorjack, thank you so much." You know. And those sweets are-- will keep you going.

S1: 39:15                    So focus on the positive?

S2: 39:16                    Focus on the positive.

S1: 39:21                    How does parental motivation impact parental investments, specifically for non-nuclear families?

S2: 39:30                    Yeah, parents are motivated by all kinds of things. Right? One of the-- one of the things that-- one of the saddest motivations is, um, is social security money. Um, geez. You know, uh, wh-when you, you know, you're talking about-- and like I said, I, I deal with attendance so I deal with a lot of truancy. And to get social security money as a minor, you gotta be attending full-- school full-time. So a lot of times the motivation to help get kids to-- what they need-- and, I mean, I was just talking to a family last week and, um, the girl is-- she'll turn 19 doing next school year. She's 18 now. Um, so truancy's not an option. But sh-- their family is dependent on her social security check. So if she sh-- you know, the girl wants to drop out but the mom won't let her drop out because they won't get the check. Um, so motivations come from all kinds of different places, you know? A-and, a-and you hope that the main motivation is to love your kids and, you know, you want to pass on your legacy and you want your kids to be more successful than you are.

You know, a-a-and you hope that that's-- that that-that's the motivation. But it isn't always. And, a-and that can become sad, and the kids know that. They always know. They, you know, th-they pull out motivations faster than anything. And kids who have gone through trust issues, whether, you know-- like I said, everyone of these things breaks down to a trust thing to me. Uh, because at some point somebody broke that trust. And it might be-- like I said, even if it's a death in every f-- even if it's a car accident, right, that's still somebody they trust and then love has been taken away from them, and that's how they look at it. So to build back up that trust, and kids can smell fake from a mile away. So I just try to be as real as I can with kids and then build back up that trust. But motivation comes from all kinds of places. It comes from spite, as well. Right? In divorced families, you know what I mean? Um, I, I just want my kid to be okay 50/50, so they're not with you. Uh, you know, things like that. And also, you know, child support. Right? You, you know what I mean? I want my kid more than 50/50. So you have go-- you have to pay more child support. Things like that. Um, you know, uh, or try-- punish the new, you know, significant other of the new enforced family. So motivation comes from all kinds of places. And that's kinda one of those things that as you build these relationships and talk and try to figure out what those motivations are, a-and it helps you navigate those parts a little bit. But it all comes from relationship building.

- S1: 42:13                    So all those motivations lead to some sort of parental investment?
- S2: 42:18                    Mm-hmm.
- S1: 42:19                    Is there a such thing as negative parental investment?
- S2: 42:24                    Oh, absolutely. You know, you, you, you have parent-teacher conferences or IEP meetings, where, you know, a, a, a mom's coming in to, you know, really just try to get the teachers and the administrators against the dad. Um, you know, that he's not a good father, he's not doing this, they'll make up stories, crazy stories. Um, uh, a kid who's diagnosed with autism, um, pretty high-functioning, a pretty bright kid. Um, mom spends the last three weeks of school trying to convince us that the dad locked their kid out on the porch and wouldn't let him back in the house. And would keep calling, "And d-d-did he tell you about this, this porch thing?" "No." "You can ask him." No. [laughter] No, I'm not. You know, I, I mean, I met dad. I don't think he's the type of person who would do that. Um, you know, uh, and I'm not taking the story from a mom that-that-that's—that's not enough, you know, to, to have anything investigated or anything like that. And, uh, the kid never told us about it. Um, his behavior was good. Um, I, I did know uh-- 'cause my relationship with the kid and, and the mom and the dad that there was another court year coming up. Uh, custody and child support. And that happens pretty much every May with them. And you can see the kid's behavior change in early April when, you know, the mom and dad start trying to find different things. And then the IEP meetings where

they're at the same time. And, you know, a-and so that investment turns into, you know, them try-- they're there. Right? They're invested-- they've invested their time, they're at the meeting, you know, but they're not there trying to find the best educational placement or, you know, for their kid. You know they're there just trying to win a battle between the two of them. So the-- you know, th-that comes from all kinds of different places as well.

S1: 44:14 So in your experiences, when assisting a non-nuclear family and their child, does providing specific expectations to the parent help that situation become successful?

S2: 44:25 Absolutely. A-and, um, I, I get f-- I don't mind being very blunt with parents, and we're, we're, we're talking about the kid. And we're, we're gonna stay focused on that, what we can do to-- do to help your kid. And, um, I kinda lost my train of thought. Can you say that one more time?

S1: 44:45 When assisting non-nuclear families and their children, how does providing specific expectations help that situation become successful?

S2: 44:52 Yeah, 'cause it, it kinda lays down some ground rules. Right? Y-you know what I mean? So, you know, the-- you know, the, the expectations of you were-- you know, if you're gonna be checking PowerSchool, you're gonna need to keep up on these kids' grades. Our expectations is we're gonna communicate back with you when there are issues. So I also think those expectations go both ways. If you just try to lay down a



bunch of expectations, and nuclear or non-nuclear, i-it really doesn't matter for anybody for that. You know, I expect you to do this, this, and this. And in return, I'm gonna do this, this, and this. And that's what the teachers here in the building with the kids, that parents nuclear or they're non-nuclear. You know, i-it's kind of a give and take and that's where that-- everything in the world goes back to relationships. Right? You know what I mean? We're gonna be able to help kids more if we have better relationships with parents. I'm gonna be able to help to teachers more if I have better relationships with teachers. So building those relationships help set those expectations and, and keep us both going on the same path toward the same goal, which is trying to get the most out of your kiddo.

S1: 45:48      How does the school promote positive parenting or home-to-school collaboration?

[silence]

S2: 46:12      Um, I don't know. I don't know the answer to that question. Um, I, I, I think the home-to-school collaboration comes with, you know, communication. You're right. You know what I mean? Or, um, w-we're very lucky here with, with the community involvement from our parents. Um, i-i-in my last school district, I, I would bet 70% of the phone numbers in our school information system were disconnected numbers and would go nowhere. I've been here for, um, a year and a half. I'm entering my third, um, school year and I've yet to be able to get

a hold of a parent. Um, a lot of that socioeconomic, it's a lot of that-- you know, it's just-- you know, even when we go knock on doors, people, ya knew they were home and they wouldn't come enter the door anyway. Uh, uh, that happens a lot less up here. Um, so, you know, uh, communication at home, but I don't know that we do promote positive parenting or, or if we have any resources or anything we do to help parents parent. Or maybe that's something we need to look into. I don't-- I don't-- I don't really know the answer to that question.

S1: 47:39 So digging to that a little bit, do you think--

S2: 47:42 Yeah.

S1: 47:42 --that's the school's responsibility to do that, or i-is that not the school's responsibility? Like where is that line?

S2: 47:50 Yeah. I think it's different from school district to school district. Um, I think we did a whole lot more of that in my old school district. Like I said, big differences in socioeconomic. Big, huge, huge-- one of the biggest things was the educational level of the parents. Um, 80% high school diploma or less. Up here it's probably-- that's probably the, the, the college numbers. Um, you know, and we would do a lot more of-- um, I, I, I know, for example, for second and third grade, um, down at Adams (High School), that couple, probably, four or six times a year, um, th-they would have, um, you know, wh-where a parent or a guardian would come in and, and they would just read together, um, doing things like that. Just trying to get early literacy. A-and so for the--

you know what I mean? You got families with no books in the house.

Um, things, things like that. So we push a lot of early literacy stuff, which is getting a parent and kid together reading together. I don't know that we do that as much up here. Um, a-and I think a lot of it is just the socioeconomic that things were-- uh, you know, a lot of the families don't even have books in their, their, their room with their kids. Um, so I think it depends on the community, how much each school n-needs to be-- needs to do those things. And we could probably do more of that.

S1: 49:15 How can you improve parental investment in your current role?

S2: 49:25 Uh, k-- I r-- I hate to keep coming back to relationships, but it's relationships. Right? I can invite, hoping be that communication bridge between kids and parents. A l-- a lot of times k-- parents just don't know what their kids want, and kids don't know how to always communicate that to their parents. And to help be that com-- look-- you know what I mean? Your kid wants you to come to more softball games. Your kid wants you to come to their band competition. Things like that. And, and sometimes parents just-- and I know this kinda sounds weird, but they just don't know, you know? A-and then they're, um, just trying to-- some-sometimes, especially non-nuclear families, you, you get kind of survival parents. You know, they're, they're working two or three jobs, minimum wage or just a little bit above. You know, and they're just trying to pay rent, put food on the table. And, uh, sometimes basketball games and those things that are important to those kids, just, just aren't,

aren't even possible. And then trying to get help explain that to the kids, so the, the bridge back. Right? Well, you know, I mean, I talked to your mom and dad and these are the things that are going on that-- you know? And a lot of times the kids will understand that, so. I think just building relationships wi-with the kids and parents, um, a-and just continuing to do that the best I can.

S1: 50:43      How are non-nuclear parents included in school decision-making processes? And in your opinion, are there barriers that exist that restrict that involvement?

S2: 50:57      Yeah. Um, you know, s-say it one more time.

S1: 51:04      How are non-nuclear parents included in school decision-making processes? And in your opinion, are there barriers that exist that restrict that involvement?

S2: 51:14      Grandparents just-- they're so-- schools have changed so much. You know, the last 20 years have been pretty consistent in schools, if you ask me, the 20 years before that, if you go back pre- No Child Left Behind, it's very, very different. Right? So the parents who-- you know, most parents now have been pretty familiar with what goes on in high schools. I think they're-- y-- w-we got the testing and the standards and, and those types of things. And pre that, grandparents are just-- th-th-they really don't-- you know, things like PowerSchool and, uh, you know-- or school, electronic school information system where you have grades updated every single day. You know, we used to get grades the, you

know, the, the half nine weeks and the nine weeks. You know, it's a piece of paper you took home. Um, there, there was really no update on, on, o-on what grades were. It has really changed. And that's where the, the technology barriers. Right? Um, i-it-it's a huge barrier for that a-as well. Uh, we do so much communication through email now. Um, uh, you know, teachers, you know, th-there, there used to be a, you know, a, a note home and i-it's turned into an email. Um, so, you know. A-and a lot of times those grandparents who are raising these kids just don't have the access to that stuff and would prefer a phone call or - you know what I mean? - grade updates, things like that. Um, a-and then again the, the, the two separate houses here, here and there from -- going into the-- into that type of nuclear family. You know, um, dad's checking the grades all the time. Mom never checking the grades or the other way around. You know what I mean? The kid's late all the time when this kid is at this person's house. Um, so th-the barriers are very different but they exist. I think it's trying to identify issues early a-a-as possible and then finding what's breaking down there and just trying to help get a hold of those things. And the earlier, we find out what the issues are, the, the quicker we can usually solve them, so.

S1: 53:19                      Now you mentioned that technology barrier there, and earlier you were talking about communication being the barrier.

S2: 53:25                      Mm-hmm.

S1: 53:25                      Are those two related?

S2: 53:26

Absolutely. Yeah. Our main-- our main communication is technology. You know, we're Facebook-- you know, social media i-is a huge way we can, um, communicate at home. We also have an Instagram a-and different pages, so with Twitter, you know, those things. Not everybody can use those things, you know? And then you get into PowerSchool and emails, um, th-those are our main ways we communicate at home. And, uh, w-we're pretty fortunate here at this school district to-- you know, pretty high socioeconomic status, especially for the least-- at least for this area. Um, you know, definitely the highest in this area. Um, so, so we're pretty fortunate here. But, you know, you, you-- we do have kiddos and it's a growing number because the whole are is, you know, declining. And that way, um, you know, we're-- you know, people don't have access to, you know, even the internet. Or, you know, when we went remote, we had multiple families who have no internet at all. Um, you know, a-and try to get those people those communications. And, um, so we have to find ways to be able to, um, you know-- whether it's-- sometimes it's letters home. A lot of times for me, I'm a phone person. I, I think it's the best way to communicate with people. Um, I think they appreciate it. I think there's less mixed messages. Right? You know, they can hear my, my tone of voice in how I'm talking to them. Um, so, so I'm a-- and I find that a, a lot of the times I can get on and off the phone faster than I can write, re-reading, you know, edit, change an email. I can call and be done with that phone call in 30 seconds. Uh, so.

And then I, I just keep the phone log. So I'm a big phone person. And a lot of times, especially, you know, grandparents or, um, you know, people who-- you know, were-- or our English language students - you know what I mean? - things like that. Um, a lot of times it's just easier to just pick up the phone and call home.

S1: 55:18                    So you mentioned COVID there a little bit. A-as you've went through COVID-19 this year, have you seen a widening of the divide--

S2: 55:27                    Hmm.

S1: 55:27                    --between nuclear and non-nuclear or?

S2: 55:29                    W-we said it the first day, M-March 13th is like the day that will live in infamy for me. Uh, 2020 is uh. The, the day that they shut down schools in Pennsylvania and, uh, all this is gonna do is increase the gap. The, the, the, you know, the, the tops are gonna get higher and the bottom is actually gonna not just stay where they're at, you know, but actually fall back. Um, you know, you, you have kids with access, kids with tablets and chrome books and PCs and, um, you know, just complete access to all kinds of technology at home. Parents with, um, you know-- two college educated parents i-in the house you can actually help with algebra, you know, with algebra two. And, you know, and then you have families with two high school education. You know, great people. Right? One's a construction worker, one's, you know, working at a grocery store or something like that. But they aren't gonna be able to help a kid do algebra two. And that's okay, that doesn't make them

anything better or worse. But, you know, so. It was our job as a school, I think, to get resources to those kids. Right? So we start with, you know, number one, do you even have access to the technology? And how can we get it to you? So we're taking some hotspots, working with the local internet providers trying to get people internet, um, doing those things. You just start in-- you just gotta start from the beginning. Do you have access first, uh, even to the internet? Then do you have access to the technology? Let's get the kids the technology that they need. And then what resources can we get them to for when they are struggling?

And our big thing that we did here for COVID is we freed up our teachers as much as we could. We took away meetings. We stopped doing faculty meetings where we get their teachers in their classroom, being able to connect with kids at home. Um, we cut an hour at our school on Friday so teachers have an extra hour for that. And we just try to free up our teachers as much as they could. And we also hired a-- um, we-we've always had two tutors: an English teacher and a math tutor. They started doing Zoom sessions with the kids or even have the parents bring the kids in here, that one-on-one time w-with the tutors. And we hired a remote learning coach to help with, with technical issues. And again, that was just the communication. And it was just a lot of communication in dealing with each one of those situations completely, differently. Because every situation was a little bit different. Right?

Some people have internet but no technology. Some people have



technology but not internet. It could just be one of those things, but it's kind of like that uh that bottom up. Like you can't do-- right. You can't do remote learning work if we don't have internet. So w-we needed to start there.

S1: 57:55 Now you said about a English tutor and a math tutor.

S2: 57:57 Mm-hmm.

S1: 57:58 Um, so that would be way to, uh, uh, address the academic barrier. Was that available pre-COVID as well?

S2: 58:05 It was. Yeah, we-we're pretty fortunate here.

S1: 58:08 And is that like online, they can access at anytime or?

S2: 58:11 So we redid that too. So we have two people that we, we actually-- we, we hired from an outside source. But we have t-two tutors every single day. Um, and then we found this company called Paper. They're, they're out at Texas and they're a 24/7 online tutoring. And look up other school information system, so they can see the kid's schedule. They have an idea about what's going on in the class and what types of lessons that are-- that are there. And, um, so, you know, we had kids, um, who were accents-- accessing that at 2, 3 o'clock in the morning sometimes. Uh, some of our remote learning students who had access in this Paper tutoring. The kids really took advantage of it. You just get online. Kids love typing and messaging now. And they would get on and say, "Hey, I'm having trouble with this problem." And the, uh, the Paper company has, um, you know, just people available at every subject area. And they

walk through kids through the issues and, um, a-and help them solve the problem. So, um, but again and that's one of those things that, you know, that the parent who's a college graduate, who's maybe taking an online course can help their kid through. and, you know, grandma who, you know, can barely send a text message i-isn't helping their kid through. You know, so, you know, th-those were those barriers of we need to be able to overcome and really walk kids through on, on how to do that. The kids don't have too much support at home.

S1: 59:42

All right. To wrapping up here. How prepared are you to lead non-nuclear families through those parental investment barriers?

S2: 59:50

I personally feel like more-- I am more than most because I am in a non-nuclear family, about as non-nuclear and non-traditional a-as, as it gets. Um, so, uh, because of my experiences, I, I feel extremely prepared. Um, I-- a-and, and I do notice that there is issues that other administrators that I talk to grew up in a nuclear family, you know, or in a nuclear family now, they can't even wrap around their brains around it sometimes, about the issues that are going on and the emotions that are behind the-- a lot of times there's emotion in there somewhere and i-it's an emotion from a divorce, it's emotion from a death in the family, it's emotion for what-whatever reason. There's a lot of emotion behind there. And these non-nuclear parent, grandparent, whatever it is, they call with a lot of emotion. And they just need to get that out a little bit. And I, I, I-- and I know they need to be listened to just a little bit longer.

And just really just let them get out everything they say, then I try to break it down to what, okay, outside of that emotion, what are the problems that we can solve here and break it down so I-- because of my experiences, I, I feel very prepared.

S1: 01:01:16

Reflecting on your career as an administrator, what advice would you give to parents in how they can be invested in their child's education both academically and socially?

S2: 01:01:28

The first thing to do is talk and listen to your kids. Ask them questions every single day. Um, and also don't take their word for it. Um, you know, check Powerschool. When they say they, they got something done, say, "Oh, let me see that." Le-- actually look at their schoolwork. Um, you know, a-and actually see it and don't just say, "Oh, did you get your homework done?" "Yeah, I got my homework done." And then the, the homework's not done, and then six months later or six weeks later, they have an F in the class, "They told me they were doing their work." "Yeah, they're not doing their work." Um, so that happen-- I can't tell you how many times that happened, especially with the remote learning kiddos. You know what I mean? "I asked if he was doing his work and he said he was getting, getting the work done." You know, and there's nothing but zeros in PowerSchool. "Can you check PowerSchool?" "Oh, I don't look at that." You need to. You, you, you know what I mean? And, um, so it-- just talking to your kids. And a lot of times those conversations can spark better conversations. You can get a better

relationship with your kid. 'Cause he'll talk to you about what happened in class or what they told to this teacher or what happened on that Zoom session with these kids. And you can really learn a little bit more about your kid, so just talk to them and ask them questions and then verify what they have to say. Um, and, and don't be afraid to call here neither. Um, you know, communicate back to the school. And communication and relationship building is the same thing. It's what all this job is.

S1: 01:02:53

Uh, what else would you like for me to understand as I study school administrators' experiences with the parental investment of non-nuclear families?

S2: 01:03:04

That there's not a solution. There's-- I'm sorry. There's a million solutions because very single one is different. People want to create a training on social-emotional learning. And "let me give you this training, you'll be a great sm-- social-emotional educator. We're gonna make you a social-emotional school." You-- every school is social-emotional. They're emotional beings out there running these halls every single day. They've always been social-emotional. The American high schools are one of the greatest social experiments ever to exist ever. Um, there's not a training that's gonna make a school a better social-emotional place. I mean, can we train teachers on how to communicate better? Can we make, you know-- y-you know, different things like we need this many contacts number o-or different things like that. But, uh, their-- this isn't something you can shove in a bucket. It's-- there's not

one situation that I've dealt with here with a kiddo and then another kid came in and say that, that was exactly what happened with this kid.

(coughs) Excuse me. It's never happened and it's never going to.

Everyone's completely different, which makes it very difficult.

S1: 01:04:24           So to wrap up here.

S2: 01:04:26           Yeah.

S1: 01:04:26           All your experiences that you've had, uh, as an administrator, dealing with non-nuclear families, if you were take all those experiences and put that into one word, what's that one word that comes in your mind?

S2: 01:04:51           It-it's starts with listening. It-- it's probably the-- you're probably-- you can probably interview a, a thousand people and probably never get that word. Um, but it's also what made me become a school leader. I, I went through a, a-- my principal, um, he-he's now the Director of Curriculum in Buchanan High School, um, his name's Wayne Harper. And, uh, I, I went to him and he was the assistant principal at Adams high sc-- Adams High School when I was there. I say I'm thinking about going back to my principal papers and, uh, he siad, "you're gonna be fantastic about it. I'm getting you coverage just follow me around tomorrow", tha-that-that's the beginning of this, uh, could of probably--uh. That's how I became an administrator because of Wayne Harper. And sat with Wayne all day long. You know what I mean? And he's doing the, you know, the discipline and the attendance and the phone calls, parent phone calls home. And at the end of the day he had a meeting with the,

um, head of the teachers' union. Uh, at Adams (High School), it is a volatile, um, relationship between the administration down there and the teachers' union. Tens and dozens of grievances a year from the-- f-- um, uh, from the union down there. Uh, there hasn't been any grievance here in two years since, since I've been here. You, you know what I mean? So in different schools it's just different. I also knew that I personally did not like the head of the union down there a-as a human being. And I, I, I thought her motivations were completely all pointed in the wrong direction. Um, and I also knew, because Wayne was a good friend of mine, that he personally did not like her. And I-- and Wayne's office, it was a lot like this. He was across the chair from her and I was kind of over here on the side. And I, I tell-- every time I get interviews with-- um, administrators has to interview administrators to become an administrator. So I get those interviews a lot. I watched Wayne Harper listen to her. And I know that's a weird thing to put it, but I can see him listening. He didn't like her. He didn't like what she had to say. He disagreed with everything. He never interrupted her and gave her every benefit of the doubt to get her point across. And then, unemotionally and factually said, "Well, we're not gonna do that because of this. We're not gonna do that because of this." He was-- he, he at times took notes but didn't just pay attention to his notebook, just real quick, one, one word and once in a while to just get his brain back on the-- onto the point he was making. But I, I watched him listen to her. And I never under-- I

knew Wayne was a great administrator and parents liked him, the kids liked him, the teachers liked him. Until that moment, I never knew why. And it's really as simple as that. He listened to everybody. He listened to the kids. He listened to the parents. He listened to the teachers. He listened to the union leaders he didn't like him. I'm sure he listened to his, you know, superiors as well. And I really pride myself on that because when you listen, you can understand. Right? And Covey "seek ye first to understand." Right? And, uh, a-and when you do that, you can really help people solve a problem because you really understand where they're coming from. I think we li-- we need to listen to people more.

S1: 01:08:18

Awesome.

## **APPENDIX K: SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS CODED AS PARENTAL INVESTMENT**

Dave Davis Interview - 4 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.48% Coverage

S2: 09:12      That's good. That's good. That's, that's good. I, I don't know that I've ever thought about that before. I'm gonna say in just basic talk, somebody may include those two things as the same, but, but you asking me and me wanting to define it here, involvement is maybe a basic level and an expectation. Investment is something that's different. Um, you know, investment could be financial, or it could be, you know, how, how deep does your emotions and your, um, your heart go towards those things I mentioned, like experiencing things, going places, um, getting materials that you need, purchasing a tutor if you're having trouble in algebra class.

Reference 2 - 0.08% Coverage

S2: 09:57      Um, so investment certainly is deeper than involvement.

Reference 3 - 2.05% Coverage

S2: 55:22      --of the school? Um, that's a really-- I-- my light bulb went on as soon as you, you said, said that. Um, they-- there's definitely this expectation that has crept in for the school to do a portion of the parenting. Um, sometimes we don't receive notes back. A child misses school. And the rule was simple. And our se-- our dear secretary reminds them, like, multiple times daily, "You know, you need that tomorrow. You need that tomorrow to, to have your excuse. You, you can-- remember, your parents can email or, or send a note. Email works." And still, the, the days pass, and still, you know, we send a re-- the rem-reminder, little thing home, even after three days 'cause we don't really wanna mark them absent 'cause that only hurts us--

S1: 56:13      Yeah.



S2: 56:13 --illegal absence. So, so it's like, "Okay. It just never happens." And then when we wind up really calling and pressing them on it, "Well, you know, you know where they were, and, you know--" "yeah. I know they were sick. Well, okay, we need to know." "Well, I had him to the doctor." "Well, um, you know, we still need our thing here." And, and so they-- I-I just have noticed a shift i-i-in-- with so much of the-- of the non nuclear that there's a-- there's a lot that's put on teachers and put on schools in terms of doing some of the parenting, you know, the teaching of things that in, in the past, I, I think the time-honored tradition is you'd think of those as, as parenting things to do--

Reference 4 - 0.78% Coverage

S2: 01:00:31 Um, now, with that said, we have-- we have programs at-- um, there are certain nights we have title, uh, like title meetings and, and monies that we've gotten out of federal programs and title. We have, like, open-house-type scenarios, and lot of times, they happen on parent teacher nights where we may have some literature, some guest who's in the building, or a group who's offering something and, and is there passing out brochures, doing some things. Um, but in, in large part, it seems kinda mild mannered versus maybe the need that exists out there. Um, we do promote-- prior to COVID, we, we promote, um, parent involvement and engagement in school and try and have them in for as many things. Now, of course, that came screeching halt, but, um, you know, we, we l-- we know-- as, as school administrators, we know the-- when the relationships are fostered and built, and we get the parents involved in school and seeing the actual activities and maybe working alongside school students on a-- on projects that are in school, getting things accomplished. That builds really great momentum towards the whole school-and-family-- school-and-home relationship. So I am a big believer in, in all of that. The part that I kinda will put us down as a-- an entire category of education is I'm not sure we do

enough, though. And I'm not talking about, you know, you hear about an abusive thing, and you call CYS to report, "You know, this, this guy's a real jerk, and he's beating his kid." That's by law. I'm talking about, like, the positive aspects of, you know, come be a part of something and, and come learn about, you know, how, how, how you can possibly do a better job. A lot of times it's hard to word it because we also don't wanna tell parent how to do a better job since I use those words. They're like, "Oh. Well, who the hell are you?" Like--

Don Hoffman Interview - 9 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.04% Coverage

you're responding to emails

Reference 2 - 0.04% Coverage

communicating with teachers

Reference 3 - 0.03% Coverage

they show up at events

Reference 4 - 0.12% Coverage

They, they don't necessarily point fingers. They accept the ownership with the students

Reference 5 - 0.16% Coverage

So parental investment is, you know, open-minded, you're involved, um, yet you're not too much of a helicopter.

Reference 6 - 0.71% Coverage

Kids don't want their parents involved. They don't want them here. So inviting them in is probably the strongest things. So what we do as a team is I'll sit in with a lot of teachers who will invite the parent in. We have a whole team of teachers. And a lot of times, that-- we bring the kid in, and everyone's there. And everyone's, "Look, we're all here for you." That's made-- that's had

a positive effect. So, you know, we force that, that physical meeting, and, and that makes a huge difference, so.

Reference 7 - 0.57% Coverage

Can we get you to-- can we get you to call in at this time? Can we-- can we have some teachers meet at 3:30? Can you be here 3:30? How about before you go to work, you know? We're here at, at 6:30. You wanna come in at 7:15? Oh, that will work, you know. It-- I'll stop on my way. You just go above and beyond, you know, their schedule that's helped. I'm not saying it's 100%, but it's-- you know, it helps.

Reference 8 - 0.26% Coverage

But, uh, it has to be a team approach. You can't-- you won't succeed. You know, one or-- one or two people won't succeed. So that will be teachers, counselors, administrators, everybody.

Reference 9 - 0.52% Coverage

Um, are there barriers? Absolutely, ab- absolutely. It's because, again, it comes back to what we talked about, you know. That's not their, their pri-- their priority isn't to be involved because they're just-- they're surviving at home. And, and they're trying to create that environment at home. So I definitely think that their ability to include it is, is challenged.

Donna Dunkeld Interview - 9 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.24% Coverage

That parents are involved with their kids, whether it be in, in school, outside of school. If they are-- investment would mean if they are interested in probably what is going on.

Reference 2 - 0.73% Coverage

--as parents being invested? I, I do talk to a ton of parents, um, not-- sometimes discipline-wise, um, mostly in regards to grades. Like, that's the big thing that I talk about, um, how their child's doing. I get lots of phone calls from parents, which makes-- which is good because that tells me that they are interested. And I haven't found the parents that I have called not to be interested when I tell them that they are failing something or they're not doing well. Um, most of the parents are concerned. So that's definitely a good thing.

Reference 3 - 0.53% Coverage

Um, now, a lot of times, too, I'm the one that's calling if they're coming to me in regards to personal issues that are affecting them at school from something maybe that's happening at home or happening in school. So I'm, I'm on the phone with parents in regards to those. And I can say that parents are concerned when the students are having some kinda social, emotional, mental kind of issues.

Reference 4 - 0.30% Coverage

Usually, it's the moms that are the better. But, I mean, I've had some really good dads. Like, I had dads call in regards to, like, grades and things like that. But usually, it's the mom that I'll call first before the dad.

Reference 5 - 0.52% Coverage

I think-- like, I, I know the parents, like, who's coming from split families and both parents are there. I mean, I do know, too, like when we were even getting ready for graduation when we didn't know what it was gonna look like, they were con-- the kids were concerned because they wanted both set of parents because they-- and they want both. Like, so I don't think time is an issue.

Reference 6 - 0.43% Coverage

Okay. Like, I'm thinking of one that just lives right across the street that dad's in jail; mom works, has other younger kids. She is so hard to get ahold of. I mean, she played-- like, and when we do get ahold of her, she says all the right things, but there's no follow-through at home because mom's crazy busy herself.

Reference 7 - 0.94% Coverage

It's not-- you know what-- I mean, and schools have a hard time because we can't change what-- like, I mean, they're here seven hours with us. We can't change what life's gonna look like. We can't tell parents that they have to sit down and do a homework because it's just not realistic. I mean, parents are very good when we call and say, "All right. They need to get this, this, and this done." They, they do then get this, this, and this done.

S1: 50:48 Mm-hmm.

S2: 50:48 Like, we just ha-- we, we honestly just have to be here for the kids and be their stability because we can't help what happens outside 'cause their normal is not our normal, and we all have to remember that that's not normal.

Reference 8 - 1.09% Coverage

Well, if these kids are seeing that the parents are interested in their school, then the kids have I-don't-care attitude because if I would say, "What do your parents say?" "Oh. They don't care." Like, you know what I mean?

S1: 58:05 Mm-hmm.

S2: 58:05 But that's, that's the kid's perspective. But once I call the parent, there's not one parent that doesn't care that their kid's not successful in school. Like, we have never come across anybody that said, "I don't care if my kid doesn't graduate." Like, you know what I mean?

S1: 58:18 Yeah.

S2: 58:18 Like, so-- but they're probably not being good parents at home, letting their kid know that. Like, you know what I mean? So the parents tell us one thing, but the kid-- the kid's not hearing that. They're not getting that support at home from those parents.

Reference 9 - 0.42% Coverage

Probably the biggest thing after thinking about all this is all parents do want what's best for their kid no matter who, no matter what parent is involved. They all do. Even the least-involved parents still want what's best for their kid. And they try, but sometimes they just don't have the resources to provide.

Floyd Carter Interview - 4 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.63% Coverage

Well, parental-- uh, parental investment, I, I guess is, is, is the parent taking a, a real active role in, in their child's development and in their child's education and, and doing everything they s-- can support that kid so they have everything they need to succeed.

Reference 2 - 1.66% Coverage

So, so parental investment is, is making sure that, th-that in the school, if, if the kid's, um, lacking some proficiencies, that they either get tutoring out of school or, you know, making sure that they have those things at home whether that's, that's a computer or whether that's maybe a subscription to something like, ::his cell phone rings:: um-- sorry, something like, um, ABCmouse at, at, at the beginning level. So I would say that's pre-- parental investment, making sure that they have, have those basic tools at home. Parental involvement is making sure that you know what your kid's grades are, making sure that, you know, if they're at a Tee-ball game that, that you're there, those kind of things.

## Reference 3 - 0.76% Coverage

But if, if the family is, is struggling and if the family doesn't quite have, have the resources to invest or the time to invest, that certainly has af-- an effect on the kid, on most kids. Some kids can rise above that and, and, and it affects them very little. Others-- other is, is-- it's, it's a little more challenging.

## Reference 4 - 1.91% Coverage

at the beginning of this year, I had a dad that, that lived in Ohio and, and a mom that, that lived in, um-- you know, ri-rig-right outside of-- well, lived in Lincoln (School District) anyway. Dad was, was upset that, that he wasn't involved in, in some of the meetings that we had at school when we had some issues, and it's-- you know, it's, it's pretty tough when, when you're, you-- you're, you're in a different state. So again, part of that was, was a communication thing with, with both ends of the family and not just the first person in the student information system. So that was a-- that was a lesson well-learned. So I, I, I think part of what you need to do is to make sure that you're aware of who wants to be involved and make sure that you're reaching out to, to everybody who should be reached out to.

## Focus Group - 1 reference coded

## Reference 1 - 0.98% Coverage

DON HOFFMAN: 01:07:46 But I mean, as, as far-- as part of this court custody thing, your, your kids, eh, the kids that you accepted as custody, are now going to a 12:00 to 7:00 program, go to a PM program, so now you're available after work. You've gotta participate X amount of time. You know what I mean?

JUDY CALDWELL: 01:08:01 Mm-hmm.

DON HOFFMAN: 01:08:01 That, that's the only way we're gonna do this. And then, my God, we can't do that.

JUDY CALDWELL: 01:08:04 No, no.

DON HOFFMAN: 01:08:04 It has to be a coordinated effort from so many people.

JUDY CALDWELL: 01:08:07 Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: 01:08:08 And I agree. I, I, and I, I feel, in my status today, that a lot of those things are just disjointed.

DON HOFFMAN: 01:08:16 Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: 01:08:17 They just, there's just no collaboration with--

DON HOFFMAN: 01:08:20 Mm-hmm.

TOM JENNINGS: 01:08:21 --local, county--

DON HOFFMAN: 01:08:22 Right.

TOM JENNINGS: 01:08:23 --district. It's just--

DON HOFFMAN: 01:08:24 Yeah. 'Cause there's nothing there.

TOM JENNINGS: 01:08:25 Yeah. Right.

Jake Yates Interview - 6 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.65% Coverage

--are you really-- and are you involved with your kid by taking them places and showing up at their basketball game and, a-and cheering loudest in the stands? Are you invested in your kid, you know, where you're providing food, clothing, shelter, water, you know, the love. And not only that, the discipline side of that too. Whether you're the-- you're the one, you know, having to take care of the not just the good times, but the bad times as well.

Reference 2 - 0.59% Coverage



So yeah. I definitely think there's-- you know, can you be invest-- can you be involved in your kids without being invested? Yes, absolutely. I also see that in social media too. Right? Y-you know, um, you, you can look involved or invested with your kids with a whole bunch of social media posts but we're really not with-- know what's going on in their lives or really being invested in them as human beings.

Reference 3 - 0.21% Coverage

Right? So, so a lot of that, the non-nuclear families, you have less involvement in, in things like parent-teacher conferences and communication.

Reference 4 - 1.00% Coverage

Um, i-i-in my last school district, I, I would bet 70% of the phone numbers in our school information system were disconnected numbers and would go nowhere. I've been here for, um, a year and a half. I'm entering my third, um, school year and I've yet to be able to get a hold of a parent. Um, a lot of that socioeconomic, it's a lot of that-- you know, it's just-- you know, even when we go knock on doors, people, ya knew they were home and they wouldn't come enter the door anyway. Uh, uh, that happens a lot less up here. Um, so, you know, uh, communication at home, but I don't know that we do promote positive parenting or, or if we have any resources or anything we do to help parents parent.

Reference 5 - 1.14% Coverage

A-and then they're, um, just trying to-- some-sometimes, especially non-nuclear families, you, you get kind of survival parents. You know, they're, they're working two or three jobs, minimum wage or just a little bit above. You know, and they're just trying to pay rent, put food on the table. And, uh, sometimes basketball games and those things that are important to those kids, just, just aren't, aren't even possible. And then trying to get help explain that to the kids, so the,

the bridge back. Right? Well, you know, I mean, I talked to your mom and dad and these are the things that are going on that-- you know? And a lot of times the kids will understand that, so. I think just building relationships wi-with the kids and parents, um, a-and just continuing to do that the best I can.

Reference 6 - 0.40% Coverage

The first thing to do is talk and listen to your kids. Ask them questions every single day. Um, and also don't take their word for it. Um, you know, check Powerschool. When they say they, they got something done, say, "Oh, let me see that." Le-- actually look at their schoolwork.

Jasmine Russell Interview - 8 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.29% Coverage

Um, some parents view us as babysitters. So when they drop them off, they're our problem, and that is the end of it, and they don't want to be bothered with it.

Reference 2 - 0.52% Coverage

Ideally, we would like them to be just involved for their kids. Like, we have a lot of kids whose parents won't come to any of their sporting events to support them, and that's rough to see because those kids work hard, and then they don't have the support at home to, to back that up.

Reference 3 - 1.19% Coverage

Um, there are parents that we call-- we started a practice this year, um, my assistant and myself, personally emailing any parent of a kid who's failing two or more classes. We're on a block schedule, so we only have four. So if they're failing half the classes, we would email. There were parents who were like, "I have no idea, I don't care." Like, or we'd-- they'd sign them up for tutoring. The tutors would call and say, "Your kid skipped tutoring." "I don't care." So ideally,

like I, I would just like our families to be there for their kids, like, support their athletics and extracurriculars but also be aware, academically, where they're at.

Reference 4 - 1.10% Coverage

I feel like if the parent is invested in their kids' success, they're going to be involved in their high school career and, and their life in general and know what they're doing and where they're at.

And, um, like, we see kids—"hey, I saw this kid walking down the street." And the parents are like, "Oh, I had no idea they were even gone." So just that awareness, I guess, of what their kids are doing and what their kids have going on in their life, gets them involved. And that involvement shows the kid that the parent is invested in their success and wants them to, to make something of themselves.

Reference 5 - 0.91% Coverage

We would email a parent, and they're like, "Well, they're living with their mom," and their mom's not answering me. Like-- so we-we've-- uh, saw more of that this year. Um, taking kids to the magistrate, honestly, for attendance, "Well, they were supposed to be with Mom, but we filed on Dad, 'cause custody's to Dad," like, so. We saw a lot more, more of those issues this year, of just almost passing the blame. Like, nobody wanted to take it-- responsibility for the kid when things went sour.

Reference 6 - 0.67% Coverage

I really just think just making opportunities for parents to be invested. Um, so us opening back up was awesome, because we were able to fill capacity for our play, um, and, uh, the band concert and graduation. So getting them, you know, bigger events. But I think just keeping them involved the whole way, going back to that investment involvement thing, and just--

Reference 7 - 1.16% Coverage

I wish there was some magic way to, to get them to see like, "Your kid needs you." Like, throughout the pandemic, we heard that they need to be in school and they need teachers. And parents aren't teachers and all that stuff. Which absolutely true. They need that face-to-face interaction. But the flip side's also, uh, true. Like, we can do so much here and so much with extracurriculars, but they need that parental investment at home to, to know that somebody believes that they can be successful outside of us. 'Cause we're, we're not family. Like, we're-- we can support them as best we can, but they need to see it at home too.

Reference 8 - 0.92% Coverage

But I really think just doing those little things mean a long-- a lot in the long run of showing up at their concert or their sporting event or coming to parent-teacher conferences, um, really can just show the kid like, "Hey, we want you to succeed. We're gonna help you." You know, uh, offering them tutoring. Signing them up for tutoring. Um, just, just giving them the support and, and being aware of where they are and what they're doing and who they're going out with. Those are fair questions.

John Black Interview - 4 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.64% Coverage

I think parental investment is a parent who-- or a caregiver who has invested interest in the student's education, um, whether it be following up with a discipline, whether it be following up with academic, um, you know, difficulties, um, involvement with extracurricular activities or organizations. All of those things are, uh, parental investment to me.

Reference 2 - 1.43% Coverage

We, uh, we offer a lot of different events, a lot of different ways to communicate, a lot of things that we ask for parent input. We do parent surveys. We do, um, parent, parent involvement

nights as far as, a non-- uh, you know, non-COVID years, but normal years, um, we've brought in, um, companies to do kind of, like, a health fair to do, um, employment fairs during parent-teacher conferences. So we want to bring the parents in with the students so that we can, you know, meet the needs of both, both of those groups, um, through different ways. So we've done stuff like that. We do, um, a lot of things. We did a book walk at the elementary school. We're planning on doing a movie night, um, where we're gonna just let anybody come in and watch a movie-- I mean, students and parents.

Reference 3 - 0.79% Coverage

And during a year when most people weren't supposed to be working, I would expect parental involvement and parental investment in their students to be at an all-time high, and that just wasn't the case.

So, um, I really struggle with that. It's really something that, um, is frustrating. I think I've expressed that earlier. It's very frustrating. Um, I think it's a shame that the parents aren't more involved in their kids' education.

Reference 4 - 0.97% Coverage

School administrators have no authority over parents. We try and try and try and try. And a lot of times, parents will become involved or will become invested in their student's, um, academic and educational experience, but we can't make them. We have no repercussions. Um, the law has afforded us no, um, leverage or, or, uh, ways to, to require or req-even request that. We can request it, but we can't require, just like the student attendance meetings. The-there's no reason why, um, parents shouldn't have some type of, uh, repercussion

Judy Caldwell Interview - 8 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.68% Coverage

To me, it's a parent that is involved with their child even as they get older, so involved as, uh, coming to their activities, involved as checking in on homework, checking in on assignments, meeting teachers. Even if my kid does well, they need to come and just meet the teacher, meet the person that spends so much time with their child. I've found through my, uh, career in dealing with parents that parents sometimes think that as their child gets older, they don't have to spend as much time.

Reference 2 - 0.48% Coverage

And, and as I tell the parents, you know, that's their job. Sometimes they have to make tough decisions. And so, uh, you know, parent investment needs to be, you know, being the person that sets those limits and those boundaries. Not being the friend, but being the one that does that and sometimes making those, you know, hard decisions for those kiddos.

Reference 3 - 0.39% Coverage

Uh, you know, parents can show up. Parents can be a part of things. Uh, I think investment-- parental investment is, you know, uh, "I-I'm going to do whatever it takes for my child to make sure that they have the best-- the best path moving forward." It may not always be the popular one.

Reference 4 - 1.54% Coverage

You know, a parent can be involved, but may not be invested, you know. Uh, to me, investment means sometimes you have to make those hard decisions, so, um, "Yeah, you don't wanna take advanced chemistry because your friend says it's too tough. You know, they took it last year and- - but you're going into pharmacy. So guess what? You're taking advanced chem. I, I don't care that you don't wanna take it. I don't care that you don't like the teacher. I don't wanna hear that it's-- the teacher's a bad teacher. You need this in order to move on, so this is what needs to be

done." Um, so I think investment-- what I also like to tell-- what I tell students all the time, you know, is being responsible for your actions. And I think as a parent, that's, uh, that's one of the best things you can teach your child, you know, "You need to be responsible for the choices that you make and-- you know, so it's not somebody else's fault. It's not-- you know, if you screwed up or you did something wrong, the best thing you could do is say, 'Yep, I screwed up. Sorry. Move on.'" So I do think that there is a difference between them.

Reference 5 - 0.21% Coverage

And sometimes when it's this non-nuclear family, um, it's about survival. And so I don't know that there's enough of that parent to be around to invest.

Reference 6 - 0.62% Coverage

a lot of kids just buffaloed their way through this year too, saying, "Oh yeah, I'm working on it. No problem. Yeah. I got all my work done." And parents believe them. Um, I had an interesting note from one parent she sent in and said, "Well, I've realized finally now that my teenager is a liar. And then I will no longer-- if she says she's online, I will believe that she is not, uh, so she's coming to school because she can't stay at home and do this."

Reference 7 - 0.26% Coverage

So then-- so then I guess that goes back to investment. So yes, parents are involved 'cause they're feeling they're making this choice, but is that an investment in their education? Not really.

Reference 8 - 2.13% Coverage

I would definitely tell parents, as I've always told them, that, "As your child gets older, it's not the time to spend less time with them. Is definitely to spend even more time. Even when a kid says, 'Mom, I don't want you there. Dad, I don't want you to be there,' you tell them, 'You may not want me there, but I wanna be there. I, I wanna be there. So, okay, you don't want me there,

but fine, I'm still gonna be there.'" So I think that's important. Um, you know, I think encouraging your children to be involved in some activity is positive, anything, whether it's drama or whether it's, uh, band or chorus or anything, but have them involved in something. Um, you know, academically, I mean, I think, you know, making them responsible for those grades. And, and I think too knowing the kid. You know, not every kid has to get As, you know. I think, you know, the most important is have them work their hardest and do their best. If you've done your best and you've worked your hardest, then that's all I can ask of you as a-- as a parent, you know. So, um, you know-- and, and it's Mom and Dad's job and Grandma and Grandpa's job to, to set those limits. Teenagers want limits. They may act like they don't, but they do. They respect those. And, and there's lots of research that shows the, uh-- who teenagers listen to the most are their parents, you know. You may think not, but they are. They are listening to you. They're watching what you do. They're listening to what you do. So it's important to be a good, you know, model-- role model for them.

Marty Daniel Interview - 7 references coded

Reference 1 - 1.18% Coverage

What I want it to look like is, uh, being involved in more than just calling when there's a problem. Uh, that's, unfortunately, the society at this time when we look at-- anywhere, um, not just public ed, not just education. Um, but it seems like there's only investment when there's an issue, um, when there's a, you know, a threat for retention, when there's a, um, quote-unquote, "bullying" scenario. That's when you hear from the parents. I would love to see the, the investment be more along the lines of getting involved with academics. What does it mean, you know, if they-- if a parent calls and asks for a resource, like a, a teaching resource, a book or, you know, what, what our curriculum looks like, I'd love to hand it to them and just be like, "This is



where we're going," like, "Here's the road map." You know, "Yes, we're not there at the end yet, but we're gonna get it s-- you know, we're gonna get your child there. And anything you can do to support pulling them in for, for-- parent trainings on, you know, how to teach your child, how, how to teach study, study skills, how to teach, uh, habits of success."

Reference 2 - 0.27% Coverage

The involved piece is you're able to go to the training. You're able to show up to the school. You're able to make those parent meetings and, and be connected to your school. The investment piece is knowing why and knowing how to move forward a-as the parent.

Reference 3 - 0.49% Coverage

Um, how do we start addressing those barriers? It is-- again, it comes back into-- have to involve the parent in forced investment. How about we say it that way? Um, you know, getting the student-- or getting the parent to come into school on a Friday afternoon or Thursday afternoon or whatever is not enough. Like there almost needs to be that, that training week for all parents where they come in and they go through the motions that their kids are going through.

Reference 4 - 0.98% Coverage

the more motivated I am for my child to be successful, then the more invested I'm going to be for, uh, for my child to be successful, um, both academically-- or not just both. Academically, behaviorally, athletically, right? 'Cause if I'm invested in-- if I'm motivated to get my child a athletic scholarship, then I'm going to invest in taking them to, you know, schools, to tours, campus visits, things like that. If I'm motivated to get my child to work at, you know, ABC Welding down the street, um, then, you know, I'm going to be invested in getting him into-- h-him or her into the welding shop and getting, you know, an apprenticeship, and so on and so forth. But if I'm not motivated and I'm okay with my child being non-succe-- or unsuccessful

academically and being a behavioral scenario or b-behavioral disruption, then I'm not going to invest in, in my child's education. So yeah, there's a-- definitely a correlation there.

#### Reference 5 - 1.22% Coverage

So involving those stakeholders and having those information sessions, um, bringing the parents in as much as possible, keeping them informed about what we do. Right? We s-- we, we do what everyone else does. We send letters when they need to have letters. Right? "Your s-son's been suspended. Your son is-- missed three days of school and is on, you know, truancy. Your son or daughter's, uh, lunch account is low. Your--" like we're very reactive, um, and I don't think we're the only school that's very reactive.

S2: 01:28:41 It-- you know, we have to be more proactive, getting those newsletters out. Um, who's gonna read them? I don't know. But maybe kind of-- not, not full newsletter, but we m-mail them out. This is a technological era. Why, why waste that money? Email. Right? Just send a flyer. Right? 'Cause it's a one-page or two-- one-- front and back PDF of, you know, what's going on in the district. Those are the things that are gonna connect. Um, and the ones who start reading it and start seeing their kids, right-- 'cause that's the other part. You have to get the hook. What's, you know, what's the hook and the bait? They have to see their kids.

#### Reference 6 - 0.41% Coverage

Um, and unfortunately, again, you're gonna get those non-nuclear families that are thriving, that are-- no, maybe thriving is wrong-- that are being successful, that are meeting those expectations. Because if they're going to attend a stakeholder session and participate in their child's education, then their investment is already high. Um, how do we get to those ones who are the non-invested?

#### Reference 7 - 0.72% Coverage

You, you don't throw a handbook at them. You don't throw a, um, seminar in the cafeteria or in the auditorium at them and say, "Hey, everybody. Here's a flyer. Show up to our seminar." No. Like at least where I'm at, it doesn't work. We have to do little hooks of, "Hey, come on in for your child's recital or your child's, um, ensemble practice, chor-chorus concert. And while you're here, I'm gonna give you this flyer, and I'm gonna talk for three minutes about this opportunity that exists. 'Cause at least I'm giving you the, the knowledge or the opportunity to participate. Um, will not bore you with all the details. Just give you enough information to let you make, make a decision."

Shawn Ross Interview - 4 references coded

Reference 1 - 1.55% Coverage

And along with those high expectations become, uh-- or comes a lot of parental involvement, uh, or, or guardian involvement. So whether it's phone calls, emails, appointments, and meetings, uh, we have people that really, really are invested in their children's education here. So, uh, there is a lot of, uh, interactions with those families. Now, you know, I, I know some places, when you talk about-- like I call home 'cause I had to suspend the kid or I had to call home because of grades or something like that, the, the schools will be like, "I can't even get a hold of these people. They're gone." Or, "Their mailing addresses don't even work," or whatever. That's not the case here. It is constant parental involvement. There is very few and limited cases like I just described.

Reference 2 - 1.56% Coverage

I think that the-- one of the bigger challenges would be that those folks who aren't quite as invested don't feel that same level of expectation, same level of commitment that those other parents do and those other families do. And then-- which trickles down to the kid. And then we've got to battle to get that kid to understand how important it is. Where when some of the

most important people in that child's life, if not the most important people in that child's life, are saying that it's not that important, then we're already starting running uphill, and-- to be able to really combat that. If we identify that early and we, we find those warning signs, um, then we can get that child trying to square it back away a little bit just to understand the importance in the investment.

Reference 3 - 0.88% Coverage

Uh, so I think the familiarity with the school system would be people that are invested and involved, kind of going back to, I think, you know, if those people are, you know, heavily invested in it, might not see that-- the-they wanna be invested in the kid's education, but when they're not i-involved in some of the social medias and not checking their emails and they're not as familiar with the school system as I would hope they would be.

Reference 4 - 0.76% Coverage

I, I deal with very few times ever where a parent just kind of throws their hand up and like, "Do whatever you want. Whatever." Most of the time, before calling for a problem, they're either trying to solve it with us or they're combative with us to try to get their kids off the hook, so to speak, you know, or whatever. But they're, they're motivated, you know, for their families.

Tom Jennings Interview - 6 references coded

Reference 1 - 0.54% Coverage

So yeah, you can be involved. I mean, it does-- you know, I, I-- in fact here, I, I know we have some dads that are involved as they help-- they help coach teams because maybe no one else would do it. That doesn't mean they're invested. That just means they're there

Reference 2 - 0.92% Coverage

Um, just resistance. Uh, a lot of, uh, personal like-- seems to be at the parent level that maybe mom doesn't want dad in-invested, or dad doesn't want mom invested. It seems to be more about their dislike for one another than it does-- you know, they're not doing it for the kid. Uh, I think-- I think it can happen. I just think we have a lot of-- we have a lot of negativity between-- and hostility between maybe mom and dad that's causing that to happen.

Reference 3 - 0.98% Coverage

You know, we have a girl now who's-- she's our, our catcher for junior high softball, and she's gonna be a stud. And her bio dad won't-- she just wants him to come to games, but he won't. And that's-- and that gets-- that's on her mind 24/7 'cause she's a great player. And she just wants him to watch. Stepdad and mom are there all the time, but her bio dad never comes. Now, he's a PA. His hours suck, but, you know, you think you can rearrange your schedule to come see a few games.

Reference 4 - 0.51% Coverage

I mean, everybody wants approval of some kind. If you can't get it from your own family, then my God, what, what-- who can you get it from? Your friends are cool. They support you. They like you, but it's dad, you know, and I, I think it's traumatic.

Reference 5 - 0.66% Coverage

Um, sometimes, we do-- we do them separately or very, very little come together, or they just won't come at all. I mean it's-- or dad will say, "Mom got it." Or mom will say, "Dad has it." It's almost like-- it's like a checkbox thing. And they, they don't seem to be as interested as the, the nuclear family, like, as a whole.

Reference 6 - 1.42% Coverage

Um, I have a parent advisory group that meets once a month. I could probably expand upon that because typically it seems like it's only the best-- the best kids and the-- and the, you know, the parents who don't have two jobs. i-i-it's-- I need to find a way to include those, those non-nuclear families in our discussions. And I have yet to figure out how to do that because it seems to be their, their time is precious. They typically don't have an hour to spend with me on a Zoom call once a month because they're working, or, you know, they're taking care of three kids going crazy. I mean, it's just-- that-- that's something I need to find a way to improve to get-- to get there and put on things.

Tom Jennings Written Response - 1 reference coded [19.32% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 19.32% Coverage

1. There is a negative impact for parental investment in non-nuclear cases because the caretakers are often working multiple jobs or difficult hours. There also seems to be a selfish entity about some parents and caretakers in non-nuclear settings where the investment simply does not happen. On the flip of that, I've seen parents over-invest in an attempt to justify themselves in a non-nuclear role.

Walter Boyd Interview - 11 references coded [13.16% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.51% Coverage

I, I think my experience has shown me, parental investment takes on a lot of different forms. And it's really dependent upon the parent how much they want to be invested. I think, at the secondary level, um, what we find is, as the students progress through the grades, the parental involvement seems to become less and less. Um, but I also believe that parental investment is also dependent upon the school district, too, um, based on how the district is communicating

with the parents. So some parents will respond, uh, more positively to certain times-- certain types of communication, whether that's email, your website, your social media, phone calls.

Reference 2 - 1.59% Coverage

I think parents can be invested, but not necessarily involved. So they, they may be-- okay. If you want to talk about maybe traditional involvement, let's say at the elementary level, you're talking, like, PTO, volunteering at the school, things of that nature. Um, but you could have a parent, in my opinion, who's not really involved, but they're very invested in their child's education, where they're checking their grades on, you know, your-- whatever your student information system is, if it's PowerSchool or Skyward or something like that, um, having conversations with their kids about what's going on in school, uh, having conversations maybe with, you know, other parents about it.

Reference 3 - 0.34% Coverage

Because I think most people think involvement is something that you're engaging the school with, where investment may only be with your child, so.

Reference 4 - 1.07% Coverage

Um, I, I, I think, you know, depending on ho-- what the dynamic is, the kid can get caught in the middle sometimes. You know, i-if it's a contentious-- like, if there's-- if there's a lot of contention, let's say, between a split family - let's use that as an example - then the kid may get caught in the middle. 'Cause the parents are more concerned about winning the fight than really helping the kid. Um, so that's one-- that's one dynamic. And we see that a lot.

Reference 5 - 0.88% Coverage

Uh, the other dynamic is when you have one parent that's invested, and the other one is not invested at all, um, or magically becomes invested after a long period of time. Like, a parent

you've been trying to contact and never can, and then it's-- all of a sudden, it's the kid's junior year, and now, they want information. Which, legally, they, they may be entitled to as well, so.

Reference 6 - 0.96% Coverage

'cause you want the parent invested for the student's wellbeing, you know, whether-- again, whether that's academic, attendance-wise, discipline. You know, if you're trying-- if you're trying to get progress from the kid, you want the parent, guardian, whoever it may be, you know, you want them invested in the process. I-it's engaging them that becomes the hardest thing, and then engaging them in a positive way.

Reference 7 - 1.06% Coverage

Yeah. I think that's tricky, too. Because again, it's-- it-- you know, again, who are you dealing with? Is it--? Like, I could-- I could walk into a conference today about any of my kids with my ex-wife, with no issue. 'Cause from a parenting standpoint, we're pretty much on the same page with everything. But I've also had meetings with parents that, they are not even close. And now, they're in the same room. And again, they, maybe, do not like each other.

Reference 8 - 1.19% Coverage

I think it goes back to the investment question. So, whether you're a traditional or a non-traditional family structure, uh, how invested you are is probably gonna determine if the kid's going to participate or not. Um, because-- or, or maybe it's the kid's buddies, too. You know, if I have friends that are doing something, I might be likely to do it. Um, you know, my, my-- I just think that parents, you know, they, they encouraged me to participate, but it wasn't-- like, I did it more because my friends did it.

Reference 9 - 1.31% Coverage



I, I think-- I think, when the, the parent is motivated to be invested, that, you know, the communication is easier. Um, you know, it doesn't-- it doesn't mean, sometimes, that is still a positive experience. Because some people are very-- you know, they defend their children, even when they know their children are not doing what they're supposed to be doing. So you can be invested sort of in a ne-negative sense, too. Like, if you're never supporting the school, then you can be very invested, but it-- the, the involvement is not a positive experience for anybody.

Reference 10 - 1.97% Coverage

taking advantage of what the school has to offer. Again, I think, at the secondary level, we probably don't do this as well as the elementary. But you know, if it's an elementary situation, you know, can you volunteer at the school, or, or things of that nature. At the secondary level, you know, coming to extracurricular events, being part of booster clubs, um, you know, check-- just to ch-- even checking in. I don't-- I w-- I don't mind taking phone calls or emails from parents, "Hey, checking in on Johnny. How's he doing?" you know. So, j-just showing that you want to be part of the process, I think is important. Because, um, schools vary in how they engage parents. So, if I see parents want to be engaged and want to be invested, then I'm gonna make sure that I'm fostering that relationship more, too. So I think that would be the best thing.

Reference 11 - 1.31% Coverage

And then, you know, what, what's your-- what's your goal for parental investment? You know, the-- to me, the end goal is to assist the student, so they can be as succe-successful as they wanna be or can be. I mean, that's your end goal is, is to help the kid. So whatever it takes then to engage families, whether non-nuclear or nuclear, that's what your focus has to be. And if you come back to that with parents, too, "Hey, we're here to work together," most are gonna respond in a positive way. And the ones that don't, you're never gonna convince anyways. [laughter]

Walter Boyd Written Response - 1 reference coded [19.91% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 19.91% Coverage

This can be difficult depending on various factors including: Where the parent's live, how involved the parent wants to be, the circumstances that made the family non-nuclear, and the relationship between parents if they are divorced or not residing with each other.

**APPENDIX L: AUDIT TRAIL**

May 25, 2021

Participant selection is becoming difficult. I lowered the selection criteria to at least 2 years of administrative experience and 5 years HS experience. At least 2 years administrative experience will allow the administrator to understand the phenomenon prior to COVID.

May 29, 2021

Lincoln High School (small school) must be removed from the study as a personal friend has taken the high school position there. As a result I added another school (Madison) which is also a smaller school. I selected this school because of its unique geographical location and administrative structure. The school is located remotely with the nearest city over 45 minutes away. The small school has one principal who serves K-12.

June 20, 2021

For the focus group, I selected Don Hoffman and Judy Caldwell because they have the most experience in the field and offered interesting perspectives. I also included Donna Dunkeld as the only guidance counselor perspective that shed a differing viewpoint on the phenomenon. Tom Jennings was asked to participate because of his unique perspective being a newer principal. Finally, Jake Yates was asked to participate because of his non-nuclear family situation and his unique perspective being at a high-risk school and then coming to a very high SES school.

June 22, 2021

Jake Yates did not show for the focus group. This was disappointing because I believe he would have had a very unique perspective and added to the conversation.