

“THE GOOD GUY, THE BAD GUY, AND THE
FRIEND,” : THE INFLUENCE OF SINGLE-MOTHERS
ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family

Science

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May, 2020

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 2021

“THE GOOD GUY, THE BAD GUY, AND THE
FRIEND.” : THE INFLUENCE OF SINGLE-MOTHERS
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Title of Study: "THE GOOD GUY, THE BAD GUY, AND THE FRIEND." : THE INFLUENCE OF SINGLE-MOTHERS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Major Field: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SCIENCE

Abstract: This study examined how the triumphs and challenges of single-parenting, specifically by single mothers, affects child development through the early childhood years. The participants included four single-mothers. Interviews were conducted with open-ended and semi-structured questions in order to grasp the real-life experiences of single-parenting and how that affects their child or children's development. Two main themes that emerged were the positives and negatives of single-parenting. The sub-themes of positives included involvement, emotional health, and supports. The sub-themes of negatives included responsibility, parent and child stress, and mental health. The findings are explained by addressing the general implications on the education field with professionals working with single-parents and children of single-parent families.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Every family has their own unique dynamics and demographics. For so long, people were taught about the “perfect family,” which consisted of two parents and their two children (Coleman, 2013). In our world today, we know that not only does the perfect family not exist, but there are new family models emerging as time goes on (Coleman, 2013). Same-sex parents, divorced parents, single-parents, and many more family units are becoming the norm. No matter the family structure, parents play a crucial role in the development of their children, especially during the early childhood years (Coleman, 2013).

Under many different circumstances, single-parent families are common in our world today. A single parent can be a single-mother, a single-father, or a single-parent cohabiting with an unmarried partner (Coleman, 2013). An individual becomes a single parent by choice, by divorce, or by the death of a spouse. A single-parent family consists of one parent and one or more children (Coleman, 2013). This parent is raising their children, usually on their own within a household. According to the latest United States census, there are approximately 13.6 million single parents in the U.S. today (Wolf,

2020). According to the census just two years before, there were approximately 84 million families in the U.S. (Statistica, 2018). It is important to consider the significant number of children living in this family structure. There may be differences in the circumstances surrounding how single parents raise their children. These differences can be positive or negative. The differences may include the risk of poverty or homelessness, communication issues, stability, loss of privacy, and lack of support (Miller-Ott, 2016). The positives include larger social support, independence, ability to handle situations, adolescent responsibilities (Richards & Schmiede, 1993). Because there are different circumstances in a family with one parent instead of two, it is important to examine how this family structure could possibly affect child development. On the topic of raising their children, positive early child development may be at stake.

Parents want the best for their children developmentally, even if a family is experiencing difficult circumstances and hardships. Regardless of the family structure, parents may have differing ideas of what positive parenting looks like. Positive parenting sets a general climate for academic success (Dietrich et. al., 2014). Many developments of a child in their early childhood years occur in regards to cognitive and behavioral developments. A parent plays an important role in the development of the young child. Educators must be aware of what role a single-parent may play in the development of their children and the positives and negative factors that may influence the development of a child in this specific family structure. It is important to examine this topic in order to understand the role of a single-mother and possible ways educators can provide resources that address the negatives and support the positives, in order for children of a single-mother family to have a positive development through their early childhood years. This

study will examine the theories and structures of a single-mother family, the literature and previous studies behind child development in a single-mother household, and conduct interviews to understand the current experiences of added responsibilities of a single-parent, along with possible positives and negatives that play a role in child development.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how single-parenting, specifically single-mothers, may affect early childhood development of children living in this type of family structure. This is important to examine because, as single-parent families are becoming more common, learning how to overcome the negatives and support the positives can provide insight which may lead to more positive child development.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed based on Creswell's (2007) conceptualization of the descriptive type of qualitative research question. Descriptive research questions strive to describe the phenomenon, in this case challenges and triumphs of single-parenthood, and begin with either the word "what" or "how" (Creswell, 2007). The research questions endeavor to explore the individual stories of the single-mothers and determine if there are similar or shared "elements of interest" (Creswell, 2007, p. 108).

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the possible positives of single-motherhood and the influence on child-parent relationships and experiences?

2. What are the possible challenges of single-motherhood and the influence on child-parent relationships and experiences?

Key Terms

Adaptability: one's ability to quickly react to changes

Adolescent: in the process of developing from a child into an adult

Adversity: difficulties within a given situation

Cognitive functioning: mental processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge, manipulation of information, and reasoning

Co-parenting: the extent to which both parents are invested in caregiving and communication and show value and respect for each other's parenting (Thompson-Walsh et. al., 2018)

Demographic: statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it

Development: the process of developing or being developed; the process of starting to experience or suffer from an ailment or feeling

Discipline: the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience

Divorce: when two married individuals legally separate

Dynamic: (of a process or system) characterized by constant change, activity, or progress

Early Childhood years: Birth through 8 years of age

Extended family: family members outside of immediate family; including grandparents, cousins, relatives, etc.

Interconnect: connect with each other

Lower-middle class: An income of \$32,048 - \$53,413 per year

Middle-class: An income of \$53,413 - \$106,827 per year

Prevalent: widespread in a particular area or at a particular time

Poverty: the state of being extremely poor

Single-mother: A mother of a child who is the sole provider/caregiver for their child

Single-parent: A family with one adult/parent and one or more children

Self-stabilization: Starting in any state and either stabilizing or changing to stabilize in a positive state

Socioeconomic status (SES): the social standing or class of an individual or group; often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation

Triumph: a great victory or achievement

Upper-class: An income of \$106,827 - \$373,894 per year

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Through theories and theorists' ideas, a foundation for current research studies can be built. In this section, four theories will be reviewed and summarized. The four theories discussed below are the Family Systems Theory, General Systems Theory, Attachment Theory, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems. The theories inform this thesis, as well as making connections to single-parenting and how this unit could influence a child's development. With this discussion, viewpoints will be created to better understand the importance of the research topic, as well as aiding in the understanding of the results.

Family Systems Theory

Every family dynamic is part of a family system. In the case of a single-parent family, this system consists of one parent and one or more children. Bowen's Family Systems Theory states that a family is a unit of a complex system where members interact and influence one another (Watson, 2012). The members of a family system interconnect. The system is viewed as a whole instead of as individual units (Watson, 2012). This theory discusses how a family system focuses on the interactions between the system units.

There is one connection that is missing in regards to a single-parent family, which is the parent-parent connection. Family systems theory discusses the parent-to-parent interactions, and how that affects the child-parent and child-child interactions, if there is more than one child in the family system (Watson, 2012). It is important to examine the effects a single-parent system has on the unit without the parent-parent interaction in place, as there could be missing factors like communication and relationship building.

Within a family system, there is a concept called the mother-father-child triad (Marvin & Stewart, 1990). The mother-father-child concept discusses how, when there is an emotional distance or lack thereof between the two parents, it can cause the mother or father to focus their attention and affection towards their child, instead of to each other. A triad of this kind can be linked to a single-parent, as there would be little or no relationship between the two parents, whether the ex-parent is involved or not. A mother-father-child triad with a missing link has significant effects on the emotional development of their child's relationships (Marvin & Stewart, 1990). The missing link may lead to the formation of insecure or secure attachments, which will be discussed in the theoretical foundation section on attachment theory. Family system analyses, as explained in the example above, show the connection between the family systems theory and the attachment theory, as the relationships within a family can predict the patterns of attachment between the child and parent(s).

There are many elements that play a role in the formation of a family system. Connectedness between units, in this case between parent and child, is an element that plays a role in the development of the child. Communication is an important factor to consider within a unit, and provides positive developments in relationships within a

family system. A factor called morphogenesis describes the adaptability within a family system (Karam & Smith, 2018). Morphogenesis explains a family's ability to adapt and grow from the process of change within the family system. Morphogenesis happens when there is a change in the unit. There are two instances in which morphogenesis can take place in relation to a single-parent system, either before a child is born or after. The change being discussed is a change in family structure, due to a divorce or separation. Either way, a parent and child of a family unit will experience this factor. Adaptability and the ability to use change to develop resilience is an important way that a single-mother can help their child adjust positively. This could come from outside factors that support the family unit, a change of mindset, or factors to be studied in the future regarding this connection between single-parents and morphogenesis.

General Systems Theory

The General Systems Theory by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy explains how a whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Bertalanffy, 1972). Related to the family systems theory, specifically to a single-parent family system, the general systems theory shows that the family is seen as a whole, rather than focusing on the concept of only having one parent in the system. There are five major principles of the general systems theory in relation to development (Sameroff, 1989). These principles are wholeness and order, self-stabilization, self-reorganization, hierarchic interaction, and dialectical contradiction.

There are two principles that relate specifically to single-parent family units. The first principle that relates to single-parent family units include wholeness and order. Wholeness and order in relation to development is summarized by relationships that are added to a family unit which are not assigned to individual elements (in this case,

members of family). The elements in a family will not have continuity and identity without interactions with one another (Sameroff, 1989). Self-Stabilization is the second principle which discusses how systems have a set point that they try to regulate while experiencing change. In relation to developments in a family unit, it is possible that single-parent families are experiencing change. The parent tries to regulate change in the family unit and keep it stable, in order for the best development of the child.

Attachment Theory

Bowlby created the Attachment Theory when attempting to make sense of distress experienced by children that had been separated from their parents (Howe, 2011). The attachment theory discusses how children will go to great lengths to prevent separation from their parents or to re-establish the proximity to their missing parent (Buckwalter, 2017). Bowlby created what is known as the “Strange Situation” experiment, which involved a series of child-parent separations to address the child’s stress levels when being separated from their parent (Buckwalter, 2017). This resulted in the findings of the four patterns of attachment between a child and their parent. These four patterns are secure, avoidant, ambivalent, and disorganized (Howe, 2011). Secure, avoidant, and ambivalent attachments are considered “organized” attachments. Disorganized attachment is classified as the disorganized pattern.

A secure attachment is summarized by children that have a direct and positive approach to their caregiver (or parent). Their emotions are attended to and understood immediately as they are observed by their caregiver. An avoidant attachment is demonstrated by children believing that their caregiver rejects their needs and is controlling of them. The caregivers ultimately ignore or reject the needs of their child and

they are not responsive to the behaviors of their child. Avoidant children also tend to end up hiding their emotions in order to not show vulnerability. An ambivalent attachment pattern is when children increase their emotions and behaviors in order to increase the chances of getting a reaction from their caregiver. The child experiences distress from the lack of attention paid to them and their behaviors show they are dependent on their caregiver. The last pattern of attachment is disorganized, when a child's distress and fears are caused by the relationship with their caregiver. Their attachment behaviors are disorganized and do not have a set strategy in place. The child feels alone and helpless. These are the four main types of attachment shown by children in a parent-child relationship.

The attachment style and behaviors of a child are ultimately caused by the amount and quality of care and attention paid from their parent. "The quality of the parent-child relationship was profoundly important for development and mental health," (Howe, 2011, p. 48). Parents care for their children and the children are dependent on parents during the early childhood years. Attachment concerns can lead to developmental issues, such as present and future relationship forming issues, and behavioral problems (Howe, 2011).

There is an overlap between the family systems theory and attachment theory, specifically through the mother-father-child triad and attachment styles. Attachment issues in a family unit can cause inconsistent attachment patterns between a child and parent (Marvin & Stewart, 1990). For example, if a mother has poor or no attachment with the father of the child, this can cause negative attachment patterns among the single-parent and their child (Marvin & Stewart, 1990). There are different types of negative patterns that could arise from this situation. An over-secure attachment could possibly

negatively affect a child's development because single-parents may try to satisfy their relationship needs through their relationships with their children, causing a poor parent-child relationship. It is not for the good of their child's development, but for the good of their own needs and fulfillment (Marvin & Stewart, 1990).

Sensitive parenting is an important factor of attachment and development of a child (Van Der Voort, 2014). Sensitive parents have a secure attachment with their children, know how to fit their needs, and read their emotions. Research indicates that with mothers facing adversity, including being a single-parent, intervention policies can help improve security in their relationships with their children (Morris & Williamson, 2018). Two of these policies include developmental surveillance and high-quality early environmental experiences. Developmental surveillance is summarized by the ongoing observation of a child's development. High-quality early environmental experiences are experiences a child is exposed to that are beneficial to a positive development (Morris & Williamson, 2018). These two policies improve security in relationships, as it opens opportunities for parents to learn more about their children and their reactions to experiences they have in their development.

Attachment styles are how a child shows their needs for survival (Howe, 2011). Based on the quality of parent-child attachment, the quality of the child's development is at stake. There is an importance in understanding that positive attachments do not require perfect parenting. The timing and accuracy of positive parenting does not always have to be exactly perfect for a positive attachment to form within a mother-child relationship (Buckwalter, 2017). As with any family structure, a single-parent family can lead to a more or less attached parent-child relationship. This is based on how change is handled

by the child and parent. Deep in the roots of the attachment theory is an understanding of finding the root of a behavior or emotion within a child and what could be causing it, possibly in relation to parenting strategies (Buckwalter, 2017). Positive attachment should also be received in a positive way by the child. It is important that single-parents show positive and organized attachments with their children in order to result in the best developments possible for their children, even in the face of potential adversity.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory discusses how qualities of children and their environments interact in order to influence their growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This ecological model can provide families and professionals with an understanding of how to support child development through all levels of society and their environments (Coleman, 2013). The theory studies ecological systems or environments of children and how those environments may affect them. There are five ecosystems surrounding the child, which includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The microsystem is the closest environment to the child, which includes their home, school/daycare, and community. The mesosystem is the second closest environment to the child, which is defined as the interactions between the different microsystems. The interactions within this environment are within the child's most personal relationships. An example of this would be a linkage between home and school. The exosystem is the third closest environment to the child, which is the linkage between two or more settings, which may or may not include the child, and can affect them indirectly. An example of this would be the extended family of the child, which possibly

includes grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. The macrosystem is the largest environment, which includes culture and values, beliefs, and political/economic systems. An example of this would be the difference between a child with low socioeconomic status (SES) and high SES. The chronosystem is the furthest environment from the child, which is defined as the changes the child experiences over time. An example of this would be a change in family structure (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

There are many influences of support for child development by the different levels of the ecological system (Coleman, 2013). Exosystem supports include school administrators, school policies and supports, community services and events, and local/state/federal government legislations that address family diversity. Macrosystem supports include lessons/events/messages about values and culture, social studies, and child development in the areas of self-expression and health through the arts. The chronosystem recognizes that there are events and people that can change the physical and emotional developments of children over time (Coleman, 2013).

While all levels of the ecological system's model relate to single-parenting, the system which influences single-parenting's effect on child development in a large way is the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In this case, it would reference the interactions between parents and how that interaction affects their children. When a child lives with a single-parent, there is a missing part of the mesosystem. This missing part is the second parent, who can either be living somewhere else, only involved part-time, or never existed within the life of the child and their mesosystem. There is or can be an absence of the influence of having two parents working together for their child's best interests.

Within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, a term arises called "parental monitoring," which is the parents' efforts to gain knowledge about their child's behaviors (Darling, 2007). It is used as a predictor of positive child development and effective parenting. Bronfenbrenner focused on the association of monitoring and family type. Research indicates that monitoring leads to stronger outcomes in high resource families, which was a family with two parents (Darling, 2007). It is possible that monitoring has a connection with the missing interaction in the mesosystem, due to a single-mother not having a spouse to aid in working towards their child's best developmental interests.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are many different factors that play a role in the lives of parents and children within a single-mother family system. There are situations that result in a single-parent family, specifically a single-mother family. There are also factors that influence a single-parent family, and ways to increase the positive factors when adjusting to the changes of this type of family structure. As there is a limited number of recent research on the impacting factors on children in single-parent families, some of the literature cited below is older. Even though the cited studies are older, they provide relevant perspectives regarding the current potential influences on child developments and family structures. Along with the limited recent research, recent studies from other countries are included as they, too, provide related findings. This section will review the following specific factors: divorce, communication with children, academic achievement of children, behaviors of children, socioeconomic status, and support.

Divorce

Approximately four out of ten children experience a divorce in their family before reaching adulthood (Tartari, 2015). With divorce being a possible factor into how a

single-parent family is formed, it is important to look into the possible-long term effects of divorce and single-parenting on adolescent development (Barber, 1992). Barber examined in detail not only the costs, or challenges, of living with a single mother as an adolescent, but also the benefits or triumphs. This was a meta-analysis research study that examined past research in comparison to current research, with the addition of the author's ideas for future research and implications. Addressing the benefits as well as the costs is beneficial, as both sides of the topic are important.

The first beneficial factor of this study to note is the discussion on negative stereotypes of divorced/single parent households. The negative stereotypes of single-parent households include future delinquency, poor academic performance, dropping out of school, negative relationships, poor self-esteem, sexual promiscuity, and welfare dependence (Barber, 1992). Negative stereotypes are important to consider because single-parent households are more prevalent than they used to be and divorce resulting in a single-parent household is not always a negative factor of a child's development. Not all single-parent households experience the given negative factors listed above, with some families experiencing no identified hardships.

Children of divorced parents may experience relationship issues in their futures. This can be avoided with the effort of parents mitigating the negative effects (Donahey, 2018). Efforts can include teaching their children about improving communication strategies, positive attachment styles, and conflict resolution (Donahey, 2018). Single-parenting is not always the only option after a divorce, as coparenting can counteract the stereotypes of divorcees. If a nonresident parent is still a part of a child's life in a positive way, this can promote healthy relationship forming and development in the child,

regardless of the new family structure. Donahey (2018) found that divorced parents that have a high awareness of how their behaviors affect their children, can find healthy ways to promote positive development in their child's present and future relationships and conflicts (Donahey, 2018).

Co-parenting occurs when both parents of a child are working together and investing in caregiving, communication, respect, and routine for the best development of their child (Thompson-Walsh, 2018). The importance of the quality of co-parenting, as the success of positive co-parenting, is a predictor of child outcomes (Thompson-Walsh, 2018). When relating co-parenting to single-mother families, the strength of co-parenting in families with separated parents is more important and influential to child development than co-parenting in intact families. An issue in the presence of negative co-parenting for the participants of this study is a lack of recognition for how co-parenting can possibly affect child outcomes. Many parents that are separated and are co-parenting show signs of only believing their conflict within co-parenting is affecting their ex-spouse, not their child's development (Thompson-Walsh, 2018). One of the main findings discussed the importance of ongoing assessment of co-parents to measure their involvement and effectiveness in co-parenting for the wellbeing and safety of the child (Thompson-Walsh, 2018).

Families adaptation over time is more significant than short-term effects of newly single-parented homes (Barber, 1992). The study compared the way that a family can adjust to a change in family dynamic over time and how families will show benefits or costs more than the short term change experienced within a child's life. It is commonly believed in America's society that divorce always has a negative impact on a child's

cognitive functions and performance (Coleman, 2013). This societal factor is based on previous research findings, which was then found by Barber to be a stereotype and not always a true statement (Barber, 1992; Donahey, 2018). The benefits of single-parent households includes the mention of formation of resilience and differing achievement patterns in children long-term. Barber (1992) also addresses stereotypes and assumptions about single-parents. For example, the societal idea that children from divorced families have lower cognitive performance and self-esteem issues long-term. The conclusions help overcome those assumptions in a way by showing that overall it is not always a negative factor on a child's development to come from a divorced family or single-parent home. The main factor that aids in a positive relationship development for children of divorced parents is for the parents to minimize conflict among themselves as best as possible. This will help parents become aware of how their conflict is affecting their children and reduce the negative short and long-term effects (Donahey, 2018).

Communication with Children

Communication is a key component of stability within a family system. In single-parent families, communication between parents and children can be a factor of the amount of stability (Miller-Ott, 2016). Framing the topic of communication with children in single-parent families includes examining the struggles families face in regards to communication and the outcomes of this issue. A few of the challenges of communication within single-parent families includes loss of stability, privacy management, and relying on others for help with parenting their children. Specifically in regard to single-mother families, women may struggle to find employment that leaves room for time to spend with their children (Coatsworth et. al., 2015). Single-parent

families also experience increased stress due to more responsibilities and lack of support from the community. There is also an importance of parent-adolescent communication as it relates to adolescent adjustment in a family system (Coatsworth et. al., 2015).

Increased stress can lead to communication conflict between a single-parent and their children, which can lead to negative impacts in their child's psychological and behavioral development (Miller-Ott, 2016). The largest area of research based on communication in single-parent families centers on parents' communication with former spouses and family members. Coparents' largest stressors are about parenting, finances, and their children's academics. M. R. LaGraff et al. (2015) examined the effects of co-parenting on child outcome. The main factor of positive child development found within co-parenting is for parents to reduce conflict in communications while keeping their child out and unaware of the conflict caused by parenting struggles. The change in communication after a divorce, in the child and parents point of view, can be a hard transition. Communication is a key factor in a positive child development as well as a positive relationship between a child and their single-parent. Findings suggest that "despite the many unique challenges involved in single-parent families, some of the characteristics of good communication are likely the same across family types" (Miller-Ott, 2016, p. 4). The family types being discussed in comparison to single-parent families include stepfamilies and families in which the parents are still married. A few of the positive communication characteristics that benefit a parent-child relationship in these family types include a positive transition in communication patterns, clearer roles, or quality co-parenting communications (Miller-Ott, 2016).

Within communication comes comfort in change and adaptation. Coatsworth et. al. (2015) examined how three factors affected parent-child communication. These factors include negative parental reactions to disclosure, adolescent feelings of over-control, and the quality of the parent-child relationship. With a positive and open communication between a parent and their child, communication can increase due to factors such as trust and mindfulness. With single-parent families, there is only one parent, or one parent at a time, for a child to confide in about their whereabouts, feelings, and routines. Mindful parenting is the recognition of a child's experiences and feelings. Mindful parenting is important because it shows how parenting can promote healthy communication and openness between a parent and child. As a single-parent, it is possible that there is an increased stress to pay attention to every moment their child is experiencing due to increased responsibilities. This may prevent or reduce the awareness for the need to mindfully parent (Miller-Ott, 2016). Coatsworth et. al. (2015) found that an increase in mindful parenting can reduce negative reactions to information, child perception over parent control, and improve the quality of the parent-child relationship. A parent-child relationship is a key factor of successful single parenting, specifically single-mother parenting, if the mother is the custodial parent. Mindful parenting is important to children in a single-parent family structure (Miller-Ott, 2016).

Academic Achievement of Children

Academic achievement is a factor that aids the development of children through all ages with the early childhood years setting the basis for later developments. Salami's (2000) research examines the factor of academic achievement of children in single-parent families, investigating the effects of single-motherhood on academic achievement of

adolescent children. There were no differences found in this study based on academic achievement between single-mother homes and “intact” homes. The period of adolescence is important to the development of an individual, which indicates how important a positive parenting outlook is for a child of this age, as their academics are developing.

Predictors of academic achievement within children include poverty risk, family stability, physical health, and social-emotional problems (Huang et. al., 2016). Intervention strategies in social-emotional areas for children showed positive developments in children of single-mothers. The intervention also improved single-mothers financial strategies for their child’s future in academics, which will later improve their child’s academic development. The goal of this research was to eliminate the difference in child social-emotional developments between single and married mother households (Huang et. al., 2016). Research has previously discussed a negative association between social-emotional development and single-motherhood. Huang et. al. (2016) examined the benefits of intervention strategies for single-mother household children in relation to their social-emotional issues. As previous research has shown a negative association in single mother households, intervention was embedded in single-mother and married mother households to analyze the differences in benefit.

Children from single-parent homes are more likely to experience deprivation and denial of some rights and opportunities. When a child is in a single-parent home, attention paid or invested in education by their parent can decrease (Tartari, 2015). Children in two-parent homes showed higher test scores than children in single-parent, specifically single mother households. This was due to a decreased accommodation for

child academics post-divorce or separation (Tartari, 2015). When a parent is unable to resolve problems during tragic situations that may arise, it may lead their child to become a “misfit” in society (Salami, 2000). An example of a tragic situation based on these studies would include a divorce. Deprivation of some opportunities for children could be caused by heavy parenting responsibilities due to a single-parent household. A single-mother does indeed face doubled responsibilities, including balancing work and caring for a child, economic responsibilities, emotional regulation and attention paid to children. These extra responsibilities can potentially have an effect on their attention and involvement in regards to their child’s education.

There is a significant difference between girls and boys academic achievement when living in a single-parent home (Salami, 2000). The difference, according to the researcher, is that girls score higher than boys, which could be caused by boys being more tough in their outlook and interactions, and girls may tend to restrain their interactions. Also, boys and girls in single-parent homes cope with behavioral problems differently. This difference could possibly motivate girls and increase the attention paid to school to avoid the conflict (Salami, 2000).

Overall, as the responsibilities of a parent increase due to becoming a single-parent, academics could be at risk. Tartari (2015) discussed how children of divorced parents or children of single-parents receive fewer maternal time inputs, which can directly relate to academics. Single-parents tend to invest their time in their jobs and possible personal conflicts post-divorce rather than investing time with their children, which could possibly affect child cognitive development.

Behaviors of Children

Behaviors, positive or negative, can have a potential effect on the development of a child in any family structure. Behaviors of a parent can influence a child's behaviors, as well as the reverse, that behaviors of a child can influence a parent's behaviors (Gringlas, 1995). The demands of single-motherhood can place children at higher risks of experiencing poor adjustment and behaviors (Conger et. al., 2017). Gringlas investigated maternal and preschool child functioning in solo-mother households, examining maternal stress' impact on their child's behaviors, as well as the social impacts and influences on academic performance. Compared to married women, Gringlas (1995) found that divorced mothers tended to be less affectionate toward their children and have poorer control over their children. Affection is a positive factor in child development and helps with potential behavioral issues. This study analyzed specific effects of a child's experience growing up without a father. This is a small study, only consisting of 63 children from solo-parent households. This study found that "maternal stress moderated family status effects on child outcome," (Gringlas, 1995, p. 1). A benefit to this study is that it considers demographic changes, such as amount of education, parent age, and race, in relation to single-mother households and how that affects child development. Demographic variables are important to consider when addressing single-parent households and child functioning, because any type of change can also be difficult for any adolescent child, whether they have a single mother parent or married parents. By addressing demographics, timing of changes in child behavior, and how maternal stress can influence a child's development in relation to single-parenting, the findings support potential impact on child development.

Maternal attachment styles also relate to the behaviors of children from single-parent families. External and internal behaviors from children can affect maternal attachment and parental permissiveness (Mack et. al., 2015). Based on the findings of this study, children in single-parent homes reported more permissive parenting and less parental supervision than those of two-parent homes, which then may lead to negative internal and external behaviors (Mack et. al., 2015). Internal and external behaviors are expressed differently by every child, and potentially based on the attachment style of the mother-child relationship (Mack et. al., 2015).

Another study based on child behaviors and development examined the influence of parenting stressors with behavioral problems in kindergarten children (Jackson, 2010). Discipline practices from single-mothers or single-fathers impact the behaviors of their children, showing a relation between stress and discipline in single-parents. There are different developmental effects of having a father in a child's life or not in a child's life (Jackson, 2010). A nonresident mother or father can have an influence on their child's wellbeing. Findings support the idea of how social support can benefit child development as well as parental influences. The study's discussion emphasizes how father contact with single mothers can be beneficial due to the emotional support it can provide for the mother. If a mother's emotions are supported, this will relieve stressors, benefit the development of the child, and lower the amounts of negative discipline. Single-parents are holding more responsibility than they would be if it was a co-parent family, which impacts how they handle stress and added pressures (Jackson, 2010).

Socioeconomic status (SES)

There are many factors that influence the socioeconomic status (SES) of families. When there is a single-parent family, the responsibilities of a parent double. Single-parents are especially likely to experience income issues (Coleman, 2013). Conger et. al. (2017) stated that single-mothers and their children are likely to face challenges and hardships economically, regardless of their socioeconomic status or income levels.

Socioeconomic status can influence the impacts of poverty on children's development through single-parenting (Zalewski, 2012). The co-occurrence of single-motherhood and poverty was examined, as well as its effects on preschool students. Living in poverty causes stress for millions of children in the US, as well as adding the stress of living in a single-parent household, both for the single mother and the child (Coleman, 2013). Early exposure to poverty in single-parent homes was examined, and how that may affect adjustment in children as well as the issues that come with poverty exposure (Zalewski, 2012). Adjusting to a single-mother home can be difficult for any child. Adding poverty issues on top of that can influence the levels of needed care of the child, especially at a young age. The effects of children's stress response system based on biology showed how much the factor of poverty affects their development and daily stress (Zalewski, 2012). Poverty and single parent status can disrupt development of effortful control in children, as well as the influences of poverty on parental warmth and negativity experienced by the child. Not all risk factors of socioeconomic status have the same amount of influence to the stress levels and responses of children (Zalewski, 2012, p. 549). Poverty can be a marker for other risk factors including resident instability, mental health, legal issues, and increased family conflict (Zalewski, 2012). It is important

to look at both sides of the family dynamics in relation to stress levels and its possible effect on child development.

As the previous study explained socioeconomic factors for single-parent families in the United States, there are many similarities in relation to SES struggles in other countries. Zhang examined whether single-parent families in China are disadvantaged due to being a one income household (Zhang, 2020). This study discussed the factors of decreased child monitoring, low socioeconomic status, and child outcome. The findings suggest that children living in a single-parent home are disadvantaged in areas such as academics and subjective wellbeing due to low socioeconomic status. Similarly in Ireland, Crosse et. al. (2018) examined the risks experienced by single-parent families in relation to socioeconomic status and adequate incomes in the workforce. The findings of this study explain that the struggles of single-parent families in Ireland are caused by an absence of support in policies, low levels of educational attainment, childcare issues, and the efficacy of financial support or a lack of understanding of responsibility in relation to income adequacy (Crosse et. al., 2018). The difficulties presented in these two studies correlate to the financial struggles of those single-parent families within the US.

Support

Many studies and research suggest that lack of support is one of the stressors within a single-parent family system (Jackson, 2010; Miller-Ott, 2016; Morris & Williamson, 2018). These studies discussed how with an increase in responsibility, stress also increases, and continues to increase due to a lack of support (Jackson, 2010; Miller-Ott, 2016; Morris & Williamson, 2018). Morris & Williamson (2018) stated that stress toxicity in mothers can be overcome through supports that bring strength and resilience.

On the basis of child support from nonresident fathers, child support is crucial for the economic well-being of single-mothers and their children (Jackson, 2010). Conger et. al. (2017) discusses two resilience factors that promote positive parenting and well-being in single-mothers. This includes perceived social support and internal strengths, which lead to positive coping strategies, optimism, self-efficacy and self-esteem improvements in single-mothers. Focus in these areas, specifically social and economic support, can improve child development indirectly, through single-mother resilience (Conger et. al., 2017).

In the book, “Successful Single Parenting,” the struggles of single-parenting are addressed, as well as how to overcome those challenges and promote a positive family system regardless of the stereotypes (Margow, 1999). The specific supports mentioned include believing in yourself, time management, rules, money, everyday events, communication, emotional issues, dating, punishment, and legalities. The book examines a child’s perspective at supporting the child and gives a parent an inside look at what their child may be experiencing or struggling with. The emphasis revolves around the idea of a parent’s relationship with their child and how to prioritize that relationship while handling all of the extra challenges that parenting provides on its own. There are many different variations of the single-parent experience. Single-parents should set a good example and treat their children with respect, as well as show interest in their world (Margow, 1999, p. 2). Children develop emotionally based on the people around them and how the reactions influence their relationships. Support is a topic that can be a challenge for single-parent families based on the lack of social support shown by society over time (Coleman, 2013).

A type of support for single-mothers discussed by Hartwig (2016) was online support, as well as support groups for single-mothers. Social media support, or online support, has proven to be a new type of support emerging for single-mothers. While many single-mothers have the support of their family, friends, or coworkers, many have found that the support of online friends and/or strangers have provided a new way to connect with other single-parents. This type of support allows single-mothers to express their experiences and feelings to groups of people in similar situations, allowing them to discover coping mechanisms, strategies, and unstructured parenting supports. This study opened up ideas of how beneficial online support can be, and how the success of online support varies due to personal, real-life support being present. The findings showed that online support had a positive impact on the single-mother participants, as well as promoted more support from their family and friends (Hartwig, 2016).

Choi et. al. (2013) studied the effects of nonresidential father support on child development in single-mother families, specifically in terms of behavioral and cognitive developments. This study's findings relate back to the support found in a child's exosystem, which influences their development indirectly (Coleman, 2013). Nonresident fathers' financial support can benefit their child's behavioral and cognitive development, usually benefitting indirectly through decreased parenting stress and parenting influences for the single-mother (Choi et. al., 2013). Nonresident father involvement should be promoted, as well as encouraged the direct influence of nonresident fathers on single mothers, which can indirectly benefit the child (Choi et. al., 2013).

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

Positionality

My goal for this research was to “understand how people interpret and find meaning in their everyday lives and identify sources that shape their experiences” (Jacobson et. al., 2019, p. 1). Through my past and future experiences as an educator, I will teach students with different family structures and backgrounds. By understanding the potential challenges and triumphs within a family structure and how that possibly affects children and their development, this will shape the way I approach guidance, instruction, and support for my future students and their families, as well as shutting down the stereotypes within school and research about single-mothers and their children. Identifying the source of a specific behavior or emotion within a student by grasping the information learned through single-parenting influences on child development in this study will lead me to become a better professional within my career path. Not only is it important to state my positionality within my field, but also to state my positionality within the research field. The position I choose to adopt prior to conducting research can influence how the research is conducted, as well as the outcomes and results (Holmes,

2020). With limited and predominantly dated existing research on the positives of single parenting, specifically of single mothers, my position prior to conducting the research in this study began with the hope to discover more current positive outcomes from single-parent families, which also correlates to how the individuals in this study overcame the negative effects/outcomes. I grew up knowing a single mother who was and continues to be a strong, positive influence on her child's life and wanted to add current research to her experience. I understand the importance of recognizing single-mothers and how strong they are. They don't have to be incredibly involved and hands-on with their children, but they want to be. I am hoping to shine a light on single-mothers and their strength, and that is why discovering positives of single-mothering is important. Within my positionality prior to researching existing literature, I located myself within the context of what was needed to be discovered to be deemed ethical research during the research process (Holmes, 2020). Once realizing what needed to be discovered for this specific research, decisions based on procedures, participant demographics, and interview styles were established.

Statement of the Problem

Parents play a crucial role in the development of their children, in any type of family structure, especially during the early childhood years. As there are significant differences in how single-parents, specifically single mothers, raise their children. These differences can be positive or negative, or neutral. As there are different circumstances in a family with two parents instead of one, it is important to examine how a single-mother family structure influences their child's early child development.

Participants

Sample Procedure

The sample procedure for this study is as follows. The sampling strategy included discovering specific data about the participants prior to asking participants permission to join the study, in order to differentiate the data that would be collected. This is identified as purposive and convenience sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The snowball method was also used to locate one participant for this study, which identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases will provide information to benefit a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As there are two different research questions at hand, one considering the positives and one considering the negatives of single-parenting, a second sampling strategy was used. The researcher chose four participants, all of different situations in order to gain the largest amount of understanding and diversity on the topic. The initial participants found were colleagues and/or acquaintances of the researchers. Two of the participants were contacted to participate by the researcher's advisor. One of the participants was contacted to participate by the main researcher. The fourth participant was found by reference from one of the participants interviewed, as it was their colleague in the work field.

Participant Information

Participants answered a short demographic questionnaire prior to the interview (Appendix A).

Table 1

Single Mother's Demographic Information

<i>Single Mother</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of Children and Age</i>	<i>SES</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Status</i>
A	29	1 child; 6 years old	Lower-middle class	Bachelor's Degree	Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino	Single-mother as of 2018; by divorce
B	40	3 children; 14-year-old and twin 6-year-olds	Lower-middle class	Master's Degree	Caucasian	Single-mother as of 2015; by divorce
C	52	1 child; 19 years old	Upper-middle class	Master's Degree	Caucasian	Single-mother as of 2002; by divorce
D	38	1 child; 14 years old	Middle to Upper-middle class	Master's Degree	Native American	Single-mother as of 2007; never married (by choice)

Methods

This research study used qualitative methods. Following IRB approval and receiving signed consent forms from participants, interviews were conducted via the video chat application Zoom due to the current pandemic and convenience of the participants. The interviews were conducted individually by the researcher with each participant. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes each, and the participants were asked 10 questions. The longest interview was 23 minutes and the shortest interview was 19 minutes. The interview questions were open-ended (See appendix B). The interview questions were formed by taking into account previous literature on the topic, in order to build off of past research, as well as forming new research. Open-ended questions are used to encourage participants to respond to questions in a personal way

with their own language (Emerson et al, 1995). The interview questions included “issue oriented questions” based on the previous review of literature and theories studied (Stake, 1995, p. 65). Once the interview questions were developed, feedback was received from the researcher’s advisor. Probing follow up questions were asked for clarification. If needed or time allowed during the initial interviews (see Appendix B). Probing questions are used as “follow up questions to go deeper into the interviewee’s responses” (Patton, 2002, p. 362).

The interviews were audio and video recorded through the Zoom application, as well as on a voice recorder, to ensure the audio quality and privacy. Once the interviews were completed, each interview was transcribed by the researcher onto separate word documents. Member checks were conducted. Member checks ensure that the participants and researcher’s perspectives are included in the study (Gall et. al., 2015). All participants received the member checks and had no further questions, suggestions, or concerns.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative data was collected by individual in-depth interviews between the researcher and each participant. The participants were told they had an option to skip a question if they were uncomfortable answering. None of the participants skipped a question during the interview. The interview was audio recorded and transcribed in order to analyze the data for conclusions. A voice memo application and Zoom recording were used to record the audio and video for transcription and further data coding.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Each document was printed out to begin the coding process. Each document was then analyzed for recurring themes that aided in the conclusions of the research questions, by performing a content analysis. “Content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meaning,” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Each transcript was read multiple times to identify emergent patterns. Notes were made on the sides of the transcripts along with highlighting in order to simplify quotes and meanings to place into the future found themes. A deductive analysis was performed to find the main themes, which correlated with the research questions. An inductive analysis was then performed to find the subthemes, which involved the researcher discovering themes from the data and patterns observed (Patton, 2002). This releases the potential chance of bias, as themes and patterns were observed directly from the words of the interviewees. A coding frame approach was used, which finds an overall meaning of different patterns and the issues within those patterns (Gall et al., 2015). Once the patterns and quotes were marked and analyzed, they were placed into the created themes. The themes were then identified and transcripts read multiple times to confirm there were no outliers and/or patterns within the incorrect theme.

Summary

The qualitative data analysis approach used in this study was hands-on and flexible to change. With the ability for this type of analysis to be easily changed and altered based on discovered themes and patterns, it allowed the researcher to best prepare themes for future discussion and implications. The approach was successful in providing

rich thematic analysis of the data collected within the interviews, as well as providing insight to the research questions at hand.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Theme One: Positives

Most experiences in parenting can be categorized as either a negative, neutral, or positive experience, which can potentially result in negative and positive effects on both the child and parent (Coleman, 2013). Even under difficult circumstances, this study demonstrates that positive experiences can still prevail. Triumphs experienced by single-parents directly affect the child's development in a positive manner. A positive relationship between a child and single-parent is a key factor of a positive child development (Miller-Ott, 2016). Emotional and physical health are both important factors of a positive child development. Through this study's data, it indicates the importance of emotions in both a single-parent and their child. Nonresident caregivers also play a role in the positive development of a child in a single-parent home, as social support influences child development and parent triumphs (Jackson, 2010). The sub themes being discussed within this theme are involvement, emotional health, and supports.

Subtheme One: Involvement

All parents are expected, potentially through law or society views, to be involved in their children's lives, yet the amount of involvement can vary. Parent involvement in

the early childhood years plays a large role in a child's development, especially when added responsibilities are introduced within a single-parent family (Salami, 2000). All four participants in this study showed healthy amounts of involvement in their child's lives, which in turn resulted in a positive development for their child/children.

Participant A is heavily involved in her child's academic life. She teaches at the same school her child attends, which adds to the positive involvement she shows already in her child's life. Participant A explains her involvement in a genuine way by saying, "I've been granted that opportunity to be open and involved in (my child's) academics." Through this statement, it is clear that she is passionate about being involved in her child's life, rather than feeling the burden of taking on a heavy involvement along with her other responsibilities.

Participant A also attends therapy with her child for his behavioral actions. Although she is required to attend based on her child being a minor, she expresses the benefits for both her and her child, based on their involvement in therapy sessions, "having that person that specializes in this can be there to guide us both" (emphasis added by parent). It is important to note that it is beneficial to not only her child to attend therapy, but she is also putting herself into the situation to better understand her child and become involved in the inner feelings of her child.

Participant B has three children, one son and twin daughters, all of which she is greatly involved in their academic and personal lives. She teaches at the same school they all attend due to personal and safety reasons. Safety is especially important for her children as their father still has the rights to see his children, leading participant B to know he could arrive any time he wishes to take them. She shows involvement by

keeping them safe and in the right hands, as well as providing the comfort of being down the hall if her children need anything. She expresses the importance of comfort in safety by stating, “it’s also the comfort for them....The comfort of that involvement for me is worth it.”

Participant B shows support and involvement in their home, as well. She is teaching her twin children to slowly gain independence with household chores, as she is involved in teaching them how to perform daily activities. She explained, “It’s easier to do it myself, but I’m not doing them any favors by that and I realize that.” This type of involvement is important for a child’s development, as becoming involved in activities and slowly retracting help is beneficial for both the parent and the child.

Participant C strives to make the most out of her time with her daughter, as her child does spend every other weekend with her father. With the time that she has, she is involved in anything she can in regards to her child’s life. Participant C makes sure that the time she is involved in with her child is personal time and filled with experiences and growth, in order to best aid their relationship. She described the details of this special personal time as follows, “...when I was with her I didn’t want it to be about making beds and things like that...she always got to stay up late just so I could spend some time with her.”

Participant C showed healthy involvement in her child’s academics when her child was entering the schooling system. She made sure that her child received any testing necessary. She was involved enough to know where her child fit in within academics, and where she may have fallen short and needed assistance. For example, participant C explained one area her daughter falls short and how she aids her in this area,

“She’s not always terribly organized. So this was the main thing I had to pay attention to and become involved in her education.”

Participant D was heavily involved in her child’s academics when her child was young. She homeschooled her child in order for her child to be able to be involved in extracurricular activities at a higher level. She explained this experience of homeschooling as “an involved and trying process.” Although this was a large responsibility to take on, participant D became involved in a strong way in order for her child to develop in different areas.

Through her child’s development in the passing years, participant D has shied away from involvement in certain areas of her child’s life, specifically with academics and household chores/activities. This is a positive factor of involvement, as she is reading her child’s behaviors and emotions in order to analyze where she should show involvement, in order for independence and self-reliance to grow within her child. Participant D described an experience from her daughter based on involvement as follows, “‘It’s like you’re a helicopter parent but you’re not a helicopter parent. You are involved and hands-on but you also let me do my own thing’.”

Subtheme Two: Emotional Health

Experiences in parenting contribute to the emotional health of the parent and child. Parents that establish secure attachments with their children, which includes observing and recognizing their needs and emotions, provide benefits to the development of their child or children (Van Der Voort, 2014). Though all participants have diverse experiences with regulating their children’s emotions and emotional health, all single-

mothers in this study have considered their children's emotions well in order to provide the safest and most effective environments for positive development.

Participant A's decision to file for divorce was ultimately for the safety and emotional health of her child. Yet through that experience, her child has also had to grow faster emotionally. Participant A has made many steps in order for her child to not only feel safe expressing their emotions, but also to communicate with her when something is wrong or bothering them. On the topic of her child's emotions, she exclaimed, "we now have a safe environment which has allowed my (child) to thrive emotionally." Her child feels comfortable opening up to her about any feelings they are having. This has built an emotionally healthy bond between a single-mother and her child.

Participant A's creates time and experiences that help her child learn about self-regulation and resilience. Controlling emotions and behaviors is something that her child struggles with, and she makes sure to assist him in finding different solutions that lead to more positive emotional responses. She explained this process of resolving experiences as follows, "we have to keep working on his self-regulation and communication when (they) are having a problem or when he is feeling a big strong emotion."

Participant B has two different ways of supporting her children's emotional health. With her oldest child, she is open and transparent. She explained that, "He understands the decisions his dad has made, so we communicate on a very honest emotional level." Her oldest child, she admits, has had to mature emotionally at a more rapid pace than most thirteen-year-olds. This is due to the experiences her child had to endure with their father. Participant B spends time breaking down her child's emotions and being honest with them in order for them to understand situations clearer.

Participant B holds a different perspective on emotional health with her younger twins, who have a different father than her son. As they have never experienced life with their father, participant B wishes to keep the stories and explanations from them until they are old enough to fully grasp the situation and emotionally handle it. She illustrated her keeping certain things private from the twins as “kind of just letting them down easy, I don’t want to totally break their hearts.” This shows healthy emotional support and health, as children of that age emotionally cannot understand fully what has happened.

Participant C and her child hold a strong bond and communication about emotions are apparent in their relationship. Many of her child’s emotional burdens revolve around education, which is normal even for children in married-parent families. She expressed that she “doesn’t think her child had any more stress than any other child.” Participant C and her child both are extremely open and honest with their communication about emotions and experiences.

A key factor of the positive emotional health of participant C’s child is based on the relationship they have with their father. She explained the relationship her child has with her father by stating, “her dad loves her and is a big part of her life, even now.” Participant C has shared custody of her child, which could present an issue in emotional boundaries and openness in a child. Yet, in this situation, it benefits her child’s emotional health, as her child is able to experience healthy relationships with both of their parents.

Participant D and her child show great communication skills which has resulted in positive emotional health for her child. Participant D discussed the trust she has in her child by stating, “I don’t feel that there is anything that she doesn’t feel that she can talk

to me about”, and how that helps her child feel more stable in their decision making as well as comfortable opening up to their mother about issues that may arise.

A large part of the emotions experienced by participant D and her child revolve around social situations. Participant D’s child is mixed race. As a mother, she has been digging into learning about her child’s emotions regarding social experiences and social justice. She explained that she “hasn’t had the same experiences as her child” but that she “secondarily had the same experiences.” This helps her better understand where her child’s emotions come from, whether it is something her child is showing passion about or is struggling with based on her ethnicity. Showing attentiveness in learning about emotions and experiences that differ from your own is a healthy way to build a positive emotional bond between a mother and child.

Subtheme Three: Supports

With the added responsibilities of being a single-parent, supports are one of the biggest components of success in parenting and positive child development (Jackson, 2010; Miller-Ott, 2016; Morris & Williamson, 2018). All of the participants in this study discussed how important support was for their mental health and motivation. Whether it was a family member helping out with carpooling their children to and from school, to actual financial aid, supporters helped assist these single-mothers to be positive parents that want the best for their children.

Participant A and her child attend therapy sessions together. She explained how this type of support is important to not only her child’s mental health, but also helps her understand her child’s feelings in order to help support her child however she can. Participant A explained her experience within therapy for her child as follows,

“Sometimes there’s things that come up that I don’t even know how to handle. We can both ask for help from the same person.” For participant A, being legally required to attend therapy with her child due to her child being a minor has been a blessing for their relationship.

For the safety of participant A’s child, the amount of immediate physical supporters are kept in a tight knit circle consisting of immediate family. This tight knit circle’s support is explained by participant A: “If my child needs help or I need help I have a very good support system.” Her child’s maternal grandpa and grandma are the main supports for their family, along with a daycare provider that was carefully chosen for best care and safety of her child.

Participant B has a large support system that has assisted her in many difficult situations. When her twins were born, her best friend medi-flighted with one of the twins to another hospital, while another one of participant B’s friends took her other twin to her home so that the doctors could properly care for their mother. She expressed the magnitude of support this showed by stating, “I couldn’t have done it without them that day.” Her twins stayed with her friends for the first three weeks of their lives.

Family is a big part of participant B’s support system as well. She depends on her mother and sister, as well as positive support from her current boyfriend. Participant B discussed how it is always nice to have an extra set of hands. This mother’s oldest child has a support system in his friends. Participant B discussed how supportive and encouraging her child’s friends are, as well as their parents. Her child is dependent on their friends, but in a positive way. Participant B explained a thought that all participants

discussed as well, by saying “I see students when their parents have no support system and I don’t know how they do it. I will never judge a parent, because it is hard.”

A part of participant C’s support system that is more indirect is in relation to her job. Many single-parents struggle with the balance of being an employee and being a mother or father. Participant C’s job is very accommodating and gives her the room to be involved in her child’s life without struggling at work as a result. She explained her work situation as well as the support included by stating, “Being a single parent doesn’t have a big impact on my work life. My job is about getting my work done, not being here from 8 to 5.” While this is not a direct type of support, it is part of her daughter’s exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This support has enabled participant C to support her child in her endeavors without worrying about her employment status.

Though participant C had family support, as well as child-support from her child’s father, many of the observed supports that emerged from the data were indirect supports. Participant C involved her child in a lot of activities aside from school, such as sports and church groups. She explained why she involved her daughter in many activities by stating, “I wanted her to find a place that was hers, not mine.” This allowed her child to build support systems outside of solely just family support. Participant C had her support system at work, and she wanted her child to be able to form a place they fit into, in order to create their own support systems.

Participant D has a small support system in her area due to moving states recently. She relies on her coworker to help out with driving her child places, but other than that she is mostly on her own. When her child was younger and they lived close to family, participant D’s mother was a large part of her support system. She explained that when

her daughter was younger, she “didn’t think I would have been able to do it without the help of my mom.” She receives child support from her child’s father, as well. As her child has grown more independent with age, the support she and her child provide for each other are more emotional supports than physical supports.

Theme Two: Negatives

Every parent in each type of family structure is going to experience challenges that can result in negative outcomes for their children, as well as for them as parents. Single mothers hold a higher amount of responsibilities within a family, as the mother-father-child triad is missing a link, which could affect the development of a child (Marvin & Stewart, 1990). Single mothers also experience increased stress due to the weight of their responsibilities, which can lead to negative impacts on their child’s psychological and behavioral development (Miller-Ott, 2016). Through the analysis of past literature along with this study’s analysis, the finding that states “maternal stress moderated by family status affects child outcome” (Gringlas, 1995, p. 1) holds true. Through this study’s data, the challenges of single-parenting evolved as three main themes, or specific challenges that were highlighted in the interviews. The sub themes of the negative factors include responsibility, parent and child stress, and mental health.

Subtheme One: Responsibility

In a family with two parents, in many cases, there are two sets of hands, two incomes, and in all, two role models for children (Miller-Ott, 2016). In a single-parent family, all of those factors are cut in half. Responsibilities as a parent are unavoidable, as children need constant support and attention, as well as a parent needs to focus on themselves at times. A few of these responsibilities include balancing work and child

care, financial responsibilities, emotional regulation, and attention to forming relationships with their children and others in their environment (Salami, 2000). The participants of this study shared their personal responsibilities, as well as the possible lack of support they have in terms of responsibilities.

Participant A holds a lot of personal responsibilities in her everyday life, as well as caring and providing for her child on her own. She works two jobs, wakes up at four in the morning every day, and can possibly not arrive at home from work until five or six in the evenings. On top of all of that, she has helped her son with virtual school and homework through the pandemic. Participant A explains the relation of these responsibilities to single-parenthood by saying, “as far as having a person there to help with everyday responsibilities, that does make parenting more difficult”.

Participant A shares custody of her son with her son’s father, which in reality should ease her load of responsibilities due to having days off from seeing her son. In her situation, it adds on more responsibility for her. Her son’s father chose not to participate in his son’s virtual schooling, which means that participant A has to help her son with two week’s worth of school and homework when he returns to her household. She explains how this situation makes her feel by saying, “having all of that responsibility on top of my adult responsibilities is very difficult for me.” This also has put them as parents at risk for legal issues due to the duties he is required to provide and support his son by doing, yet he is not following through. He is not showing signs of support by providing time and involvement in activities that affect the development of his child in important ways.

Participant B discussed how busy her life is as a single mother, especially in regards to her studies in school. She had to put her master's degree on hold for six years due to having children. With three children, she explained that, "I don't have a second to myself ever." She has alarms for all doctor's appointments to remember, and sometimes does her children's chores just because it saves time. The responsibilities of having three children with only one set of hands is an extremely strong responsibility and can be harmful to reaching your own goals as a parent.

Participant B discussed how all types of support are your responsibility as a single-parent. The financial, emotional, and physical support are fully on you as a single-parent. Even though she has a strong support system, it's difficult to manage four lives all at once, every day. Participant B stated, "you have to do it all. Be the good guy, the bad guy, and the friend." This statement perfectly sums up the amount of responsibility held by one parent and how that can affect one's everyday life.

Participant C has an interesting approach to the responsibility of being a single-parent. When asked how being a single parent affects her everyday life, she explained that it's hard to say because she has never been anything else. The two main responsibilities that participant C sees as a challenge would be in terms of routine and primary responsibilities, as well as with her child's education. As she gets home from work at 5:30 pm most days, there is a small window of time to complete all of the steps needed before putting her child to bed for the night. She explained that it is "especially hard when they are really little". Her ex-spouse provides financial child care support, but participant C explained that it is in no way paying even half of the expenses of having a child. As far as primary responsibilities, participant C explained her stance by stating, "I

was primary breadwinner, primary child raiser, primary house custodian, and primary system administrator. Your primary responsibilities are everything".

When participant C's daughter was in school, prior to college, she had to step in and help her daughter out with the common responsibilities of students in school. She discussed how her daughter was not quite as organized as she needed to be, so that was when she had to step in and make it her responsibility to make sure her daughter was completing what she needed to do. Participant C helped her daughter form more of her own responsibilities as she developed and grew older.

Participant D has many responsibilities as she has been a single mother since day one of her child being born, and the only support being provided by the father is with a small amount of child support. She discussed how the responsibilities of work and a child together is handled, which usually involves her having to alter her work schedule in order to provide the needed support for her child. The disconnect from work to being a mother is partially a blurred line, as she explains, "I work all day then when I get off it's like, how can I entertain her". She is the "sole provider" as she said, providing constant mental, emotional, physical, and financial support, with "every minute of every day being consumed with this."

When participant D's daughter was younger, she homeschooled her. This caused a lot of frustration in participant D as well as in her daughter, because now she was her provider, mother, friend, and teacher all in one human. As she has grown older, she is now in high school and taking responsibility for her own school work. Participant D has now shown a strict line between mother and teacher. She helps her daughter when she needs it, or when she is struggling with something emotionally, rather than helping with

school responsibilities. She explained this switch as “navigating the waters on where she needs to be responsible for herself and her decisions.” This does not mean the financial, emotional, mental and most physical supports and responsibilities are not still present, though.

Subtheme Two: Parent and Child Stress

As a single-parent’s responsibilities are doubled, stress can increase due to a magnitude of challenges. Parent stress and how it is handled can also influence child stress levels and development (Gringlas, 1995). Change can be difficult for any child, let alone a child that is experiencing a change in family structure or day-to-day scheduling due to shared custody or other reasons. All participants discussed their stress levels in different ways, along with various factors that cause these levels of stress. They also discussed their perceived ideas of their child’s stress levels, and possible reasons for the stress their child or children are experiencing. The stress levels for each participant and their child/children were based on a 1 (not stressed) to 10 (very stressed) scale.

Participant A, when asked what her stress level was as a single-parent, said “Definitely a 10”. One of the specifics that causes her stress to increase revolves around her child’s schooling, especially the lack of virtual schooling her son’s father contributes to. School is also a source of stress for participant A’s son, as he does not understand the routine of schooling that is happening due to shared custody. Most of the stress surrounding participant A as a single-mother is related to anything her son’s father does while he is in charge of him. He will tell her son things that the son shouldn't be hearing in regards to their past relationship, causing her son to ask her questions that she believes

are out of her boundaries to share. There is built up stress worrying about what to say to her son about situations that he should not know about.

When participant A was asked what she believed her son's stress levels were, she said a 6 or 7. He asks a lot of questions and has trouble understanding the family situation he is in. This is because his father tells him everything, which is mostly things he should not know about due to his emotional safety. His mother, participant A, keeps things from him for his safety. The lack of connection stresses him out. There is no consistency or safety in his father's home. Participant A explained that her son expresses his stress by showing negative behaviors in his father's home or at school.

Participant B, when asked what her stress level was as a single-parent, said "easily an 8 or 9". Yet, she also stated that for the first four years of her twin daughters lives, she believes she should've been medicated due to the amount of stress she was under. Most of this stress came from the health issues of her daughters during that time, along with raising a son on top of that. Even with the support present in her life during those times of hardship, her stress came from a place of care and worry, wondering if her daughters would be okay, while attempting to act fine while tending to her older child. There were many situations during that time that were out of control, causing her stress to rise immensely.

Stress in relation to participant B's children are different for her twin daughters than for her son. She explained that her twin daughters practically have no stress, as they are only six years old. On the other hand, her older son has a stress level of a 6 or 7 on most days. There are two main reasons that bring on stress for her son. The first factor of his stress would be that he had to grow up way too fast. This is due to the amount of

responsibility he had to take on at a young age to help his mother and the twins. The second factor of his stress is his worry for his mother (participant B). Participant B stated, “with my son, I would assume it’s very stressful on him to see his mom struggle.” While he takes on a lot of responsibility for his mother, he is building more stress onto his plate.

Participant C is partially different from the other single mothers interviewed when it comes to the theme of parent and child stress. When asked about her stress level, she replied, “Um maybe a 4. I had it really easy.” I believe this is where it is important to discuss that this scale is based on your stress levels as a single-parent specifically. In other discussions within the interview, participant C explained that she did have stressful times, but they were no different than a parent within a married family. Rather than being stressed alongside a spouse, she was experiencing the “normal” stress levels of a parent doing their best to raise a positively developing child.

Participant C expressed the same type of response about her daughter’s stress levels. She explained that all kids have a lot of stress, but she does not believe her child had any more stress than a child within a married family structure. One specific thing that is important to touch on is when participant C stated, “I think it’s ridiculous when adults think children's lives are so carefree. No. They’re almost more stressed than adults.” Participant C communicated that even children with two parents experience stress in their day to day lives, and it should be normalized.

Participant D, when asked what her stress level was as a single-parent, said it was a “7 out of 10 on an average day”. Her explanation of why it was on the higher scale is due to everyday challenges, mostly in relation to her daughter’s changing emotions and moods. Most of the stress she has during the everyday challenges is caused by trying to

navigate her daughter's struggles, understanding them, and trying to figure out what to do in order to solve them. She is the only number her daughter can call when she needs something, whether it's emotional support or explaining that there's no food that she wants to eat in the pantry. There's small stressors and large stressors, and they vary day-to-day.

Participant D had a two-sided answer when asked about her daughter's stress. As her mother, she believes that her daughter should have no stress. Yet, she perceives her daughter's stress to be about a 6 on a normal day, and a 10 some days. Most of her daughter's stress comes from normal teenager experiences, for example, girls at school being mean or someone declining her call. On the topic of being the daughter of a single-parent, participant D stated, "as far as having to do anything with her dad, her stress is really non-existent. Her dad doesn't really exist to her." This relates back to participant C's daughter, and how she does not believe her daughter has any more stress than a child within a two parent household.

Subtheme Three: Mental Health

Mental health is important to recognize in any child, as there are many changes and emotions that are unknown and possibly scary for developing children. A strong attachment between a parent and child is important for the development and mental health of a child (Howe, 2011). While all participants and their child or children had strong and healthy relationships, there were still changes and experiences out of their control that caused their children's mental health to be at risk.

Participant A's child encountered tough experiences through the early years of his childhood. There was physical abuse from his father onto his mother that he would have

to watch as a young child. This has caused participant A's child to experience a few mental health concerns as he has developed. From a young age, her son exhibited severe behavior problems. Many of these behaviors were expressed either at school or during/prior to him leaving to go to his father's house. When he is feeling big emotions, he resorts to physical behaviors, such as hitting, running, or hiding. These behaviors have started to improve over the past couple years, but they still occur frequently when he is at his father's house. Participant A expressed her thoughts on these behaviors by stating, "there are pretty significant things happening at home and this child is just trying to process it and can't." Participant A is constantly working on resilience with her son, but due to past and present experiences with his father, he is still working on controlling these behaviors and emotions.

Participant B's twin daughters, not knowing their father and also not being mature enough to understand emotions and feelings on a deep level, do not struggle with mental health issues. Participant B's older son has a few roadblocks he is working on conquering in order to improve his mental health. Her son is very responsible and involved in helping the family out, but that also puts a lot of burden and pressure on him at times. His twin sisters are very dependent on him, as he cares for them a lot to help his mother. He has seen his mother struggle with his father, and had to mature and develop faster than a child from a married parent family would. Before participant B divorced her ex-husband, her son was being controlled by his father and this was hard on him mentally. Then once they divorced, his mother had twins and suddenly he was expected to be slightly more independent and helpful at quite a young age. While participant B's son does not struggle with specific mental health challenges, there are challenges he is learning to overcome

that, if not overcome, she worries this could affect his mental health and emotional health in the future.

Participant C's daughter's mental health is stable, but she struggles with a few inner emotions and behaviors that can be a challenge at times. It is important to keep in mind how the relationship between her daughter and father is positive. Participant C slightly touched on the topic of how her daughter has a "deep seated need to not disappoint me." Without more information on that phrase, it opens up doors to analyze and attempt to understand why she could feel that way. It could be from the divorce, her mother's hard job, or anything. Yet this statement does make one wonder the impact or fear of disappointing her mother has on participant C's daughter. Her daughter also is diagnosed with and struggles with general anxiety disorder. She explained that her daughter's anxiety is not severe, but it does increase when "things start to pile up on her mentally." The last challenge within participant C's daughter's mental health is in regard to social interactions. She is very introverted, which could be a cause of being an only child in a single-parent household for her whole life. Participant C explained that her daughter "really needs a lot of time to herself to come down off the day and experiences." This is not a negative factor per se, but it does show the mental struggle of a long day of social interactions for her daughter on certain days.

Participant D's daughter struggles with self-worth and, at many obstacles or experiences, doesn't think she is good enough. Participant D believes that this has to do with the challenges she has had thus far in her life, which can affect her drive and focus. A factor that links to her daughter's emotions, as well, is her drive for social justice, but it was a long road to find this mental drive. She is mixed race, as her mother is Native

American and her father was African American. Many of the challenges she faces socially are in regards to parents or friends who judge her based on the color of her skin. This greatly affects mental health and emotional challenges, but her daughter is slowly learning to overcome her self-esteem and self-worth doubts. Participant D explains, “...She has to overcome. She just has to get there. It’s a lot of positive (emotional) reinforcement.” As participant D is a single-parent, and of a different ethnicity, it is a learning experience for her, as well as an emotional load to help her daughter feel seen and heard. Yet, she is focusing on supporting her daughter and learning more in order to improve her knowledge and her daughter’s mental health.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Findings, discussion, and implications

Two research questions were formulated in order to guide this study towards the findings related to the triumphs and challenges of single-parenting and its influences on child development. These two questions were mapped out to plan interview questions that were answered by single-mothers. The following shows the research questions and their answers:

Research question 1: What are the possible positives of single-motherhood and the influence on child-parent relationships and experiences?

The participants demonstrated the importance and influence of positive parenting even under difficult circumstances through three “positives” sub-themes. Through the sub-theme of involvement, analysis found that when a single-parent has a healthy amount of involvement in their children’s lives, positive development prevails. Participant D explained that her daughter always says that she is “involved and hands-on, but also lets her do her own thing.” When single-parents can show involvement but also handle the

responsibilities of being a “sole provider,” as participant D said, this directly aids in a positive development and triumph for their child’s development.

Within the theme of emotional health, the data analyzed showed that a healthy attachment, safety, and open-ness between a single-parent and their child encourages a positive child development. Participant A explains that her family “now has a safe environment which has allowed her children to thrive emotionally.”

The sub-theme of supports touches on the physical and emotional supports these participants had in their lives to support them in their single-parenting journey. With supports, it is not always just about supporting the children, but also supporting the single-mothers. Participant A explained this by stating, “If my child needs help or I need help, I have a very good support system.”

Research question 2: What are the possible challenges of single-motherhood and the influence on child-parent relationships and experiences?

There are many challenges faced by any parent, which can possibly affect child development directly or indirectly. This study’s participants explained the added challenges a single-parent face with only one primary caregiver. Effects on child development based on these challenges were analyzed into sub-themes. These single-parent’s challenges showed increase due to added responsibilities. The participants all work difficult jobs, along with caregiving for their child or children on their own in their day-to-day lives. Participant B explained that she has to be the “good guy, bad guy, and friend”, and how this can impact her relationship with her child due to all of the responsibilities she holds as one individual. The overall most challenging responsibility agreed upon by all four participants data is financial responsibility.

Participants were asked about their stress levels as a single-parent, as well as what they perceive their child's stress levels to be throughout their development. Stress can produce challenges, just as challenges can produce stress. The main influences in parent stress were finances, child academics, custody issues, and emotional support for their children. The main influences in child stress were periods of change, academics, father-involvement, and emotional burden.

Change can cause mental distress or mental health issues in developing children (Coleman, 2013). With children that experienced a divorce or separation between their parents at a young age, this may cause negative influences on their mental health. Some examples of mental health concerns in children of single-parent families found through this study include negative behavioral problems, lack of processing change, dependency, anxieties, and self-worth struggles. Not all of these are caused directly by being a child of a single-parent, but many are indirectly caused by the amount of stress and responsibilities they observe within their family.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The structure of this study was formed in order to find not only the challenges of single-parenting but also the triumphs. Prior research indicates difficulties of finding positives of single-parenting, yet this study demonstrated that there are many triumphs single-parent families can achieve. All of the participants were extremely open in their interviews sharing stories that aided in learning about their lives as single-parents and how their children benefit or struggle in the result of their specific situations. It was a strength that two of my participants are educators as the future implications of this study

will relate to how educators can care for children and parents of single-parent families. A couple of the themes, including support and child behaviors, suggested in my literature review section and prior research actually became part of the themes that emerged from the data collection and analysis that were conducted through this study. These strengths provided the study with personal and raw stories and knowledge about the good and bad within a single-parenting household.

Limitations

As with all research, there are a few limitations of this study. The first limitation would be that only four participants were interviewed. This was due to a time constraint and availability of single parents. Another limitation would be that all of the participants are single-mothers, lacking the addition of a single-father in this study. Single-mothers are more prevalent and easier to find for participation, as single-fathers are less prominent in our society today. The last limitation would be that it could have been beneficial to have a participant who is in the lower or upper class based on socioeconomic status. All of the participants mentioned finances being a responsibility, but none of them struggled financially or with employment due to being a single-parent.

Implications for Practice

General Implications

This study emerges with general implications on the educational field when working with single-parents and single-parent children. When working with single-parents, professionals within the educational field should show understanding and grace for these parents. Single-mothers are taking every day, one step at a time, usually just trying to get through the next hour without forgetting to pick someone up or pack a lunch

box. This study indicates that parent behavior and stress translates to their child and vice versa. This is important to remember because there could be a day that the responsibilities are too much for them and they forget to pick up their child or pack their snack. Educators, if aware of the situation, should expect these situations to occur and reach out to single-parents to see what they can do to help them. Even if it is just keeping a snack box in their desk for them when their parents forget, it may take a load off of their extremely full plate. Educators should understand that single-mothers need all of the support they can get. All of the participants of this study expressed their gratitude for any type of support, no matter how small or large that support was.

For educators working with children of single-parents, the most important factor is to know where the root of an emotional or behavioral issue originates. It is most likely not having to do with anything at school, but is happening at home, whether it is their mother or father's home. Making school a safe place for every child is important. Due to the amount of responsibility their parent holds, it is possible that the most attention they need is received when they are at school from their teachers and administrators.

Educators should make time to spend time with all students but especially those who have a single-parent and try to understand where the root of that feeling or behavior is coming from. Parents and professionals should understand that educators are a part of children's lives in a large way and they can consider educators as caregivers. Children of single-parent families should not be treated any differently, but accommodated in any way an educator can to make sure they think of school as a calm and safe place away from the possible crazy or stress at home.

Implications for Future Research

Future research would benefit from additional research on child adaptation to change, the types of father involvement, and demographic differences in families of single-parents. These three factors emerged through this study but were not examined within the themes and data analysis process. Future research would also benefit from examining the positives of single-parenting overall, as this study provided only a small part of the triumphs single-parents may achieve.

Final Thoughts

This study addressed a problem within the research field, which was a lack of knowledge on the positives of single-parenting. Although this study was a small portion of the experiences faced by single-parents, it indicates that studying and observing the triumphs, as well as the challenges of single-parenting, is beneficial to families and children in today's society. There are many implications from this study for future actions by educators, families, professionals, and communities based on the number one positive theme, which is support. Single-parents and children of single-parents benefit greatly from all types of support given to them.

A main point of this study that is important to remember is the emphasis on relationships and how they can influence child development either positively or negatively. All of the participants of this study had healthy parent-child relationships, even when they are missing that parent-parent relationship that married parent families have. Single-parent families, according to the findings of this study, used their situation to their advantage and built strong relationships that ultimately guided them to form positive experiences, even when facing the everyday challenges of being a parent in

general. Participant B explained, “I see students when their parents have no support and I don't know how they do it. I will never judge a parent because it is hard.” Through this statement, we learn that even through the difficult times single-parents face, they acknowledge the impact of support and are still thinking of how they can help others. All of the participants in this study demonstrated a true caring about others and their children more than themselves. This speaks volumes about how special and strong single-parents are. They deserve to be recognized for that. This study highlights the struggles and triumphs of single-parents and also sheds light on the strength and hearts of the single-parent families in this study.

The completion of this study and research may spark more conversation and interest in finding the benefits of single-parenting on child development. There are numerous existing studies about the negative effects of single parenting. Readers tend to overlook the positive side of single-parenting. Single-parents and their children deserve to be accepted and supported, whether they are facing more challenges or more triumphs on a given day. As more light is shone on the positive benefits of single-parenting and how strongly the triumphs influence child development, support for single-parents may increase.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Demographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you?
_____ (years)
2. What is your gender?
_____ Female
_____ Male
_____ Other
3. How many children do you have?
○ _____
4. How old are your children?
○ _____
5. What is your Socioeconomic Status (SES)?
_____ Upper class
_____ Upper-middle class
_____ Middle class
_____ Lower-middle class
_____ Lower class
_____ Prefer not to answer
6. Which of these indicates the amount of school you attended?
_____ Attended high school, but did not complete
_____ Graduated high school
_____ GED
_____ Taken some college classes
_____ Associates Degree
_____ Bachelor's Degree
_____ Graduate degree (Masters or higher)

7. What is your ethnic or racial group?
- Caucasian/White
 - African American
 - Native American
 - Asian
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Multiracial
 - Other (specify: _____)

Appendix B. Interview Questions

- 1) What situation resulted in you becoming a single-parent?
 - a) How did this change your role in parenting?
- 2) How does being a single mother affect your everyday life?
- 3) Are there any added challenges affecting your everyday life?
- 4) What are your responsibilities in your family? What responsibilities, if any, do your children have?
- 5) How would you explain your communication with your child/children?
- 6) Explain your involvement in your child/children's academic lives.
- 7) What are a few positive behaviors you have seen develop in your child? What do you believe sparks these behaviors?
- 8) What are a few negative behaviors you have seen from your child? What do you believe sparks these behaviors?
- 9) What activities or supports helped you overcome the challenges of being a single mother?
- 10) What activities or supports helped your child/children adapt to the new family structure?

Follow-up questions (if time permits):

- 1) How would you rate your parental stress overall through your children's development, on a scale of 1-10? How would you rate your child's stress on a scale of 1-10?
- 2) If applicable, how did your child handle the transition into having a single-parent?
- 3) Who, if anyone, helps or helped with caregiving and support for your family?

Appendix C. IRB Approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 12/07/2020
Application Number: IRB-20-540
Proposal Title: Examining the Impact of Single Parenting on Child Development

Principal Investigator: Macy Collison
Co-Investigator(s):
Faculty Adviser: Gretchen Cole Lade
Project Coordinator:
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Exempt
Exempt Category:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in 45CFR46.

This study meets criteria in the Revised Common Rule, as well as, one or more of the circumstances for which continuing review is not required. As Principal Investigator of this research, you will be required to submit a status report to the IRB triennially.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Sincerely,
Oklahoma State University IRB

VITA

Macy Parker Collison

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: “THE GOOD GUY, THE BAD GUY, AND THE FRIEND,” : THE
INFLUENCE OF SINGLE-MOTHERS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Major Field: Human Development and Family Science

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in your Human
Development at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2021.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in your Human
Development at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2020.