

A CLASS OF THEIR OWN: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON HOUSEHOLD
COMPOSITION, CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM, AND GRADUATION AMONG AFRICAN
AMERICAN MALES

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. Chronic absenteeism is missing 10% or more of the academic school year. Using Bowen family systems theory as the theoretical framework helped examine if household composition is related to chronic absenteeism and graduation in African American males. In addition, this study explored the factors that best differentiated single-mother households from two-parent households. This study was conducted in order to develop paternal involvement programs, mentoring programs, attendance programs, and academic programs to increase graduation rates and decrease chronic absenteeism for African American males. The sample included African American males who were enrolled in high school in South Carolina between 2013 and 2018. Archival data were collected from the South Carolina Department of Education on graduation and chronic absenteeism and the U.S. Census Bureau on the household compositions of single-mother and two-parent households and the median household income. Results were analyzed using Classification Tree Analysis with a Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection growth method and a Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the statistical relationship between the variables. The results of the study indicated a significant relationship between household composition: single-mother and two-parent, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American males. Additionally, race, income below \$62,028, nongraduate, and not chronically absent were identified as factors that differentiated students with single mothers from students with two-parents.

Keywords: African American, father absence, graduation, Bowen family systems theory, and chronic absenteeism.

Dedication

I thank God Almighty for His grace, mercy, and strength to complete this work. This work is dedicated to my parents, Isaiah Garrett, Jr., who died a month before I was born, and Jessie Mae Dunbar-Garrett, who died four months after I was born. Thanks for the gift of life. I am so sorry that God loved both of you more before I had the opportunity to know you.

To my oldest two sisters, Patricia Bolar and Catherine Harris, thanks for stepping in as my “mother.” Thank you for your incredible sacrifice. You were 18 years old when our mother died, and you took on a tremendous amount of responsibility so that I could live my life surrounded by family, love, and support. The strength, the passion, the courage, and the love provided everything I needed. I am forever grateful to the both of you. My husband, Tyrone Moultrie, my strength, my rock, thanks for everything, but most all, thanks for the love, support, and the words of encouragement. To my daughter, Shantia Garrett, and my sons, Tyler Garrett, Tyrone D. Moultrie (rest in peace), Tevin Anderson, and Brandon Anderson, thank you. Thanks for giving me the space and time I needed to move forward with this dissertation.

Most importantly, to all the absent fathers, your sons need you more than you will ever understand. Be watchful; stand firm in the faith; act like men; be strong. Let all that you do be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:13-14).

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First, I give honor to Jesus Christ, who reminds me daily that: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

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List of Abbreviations

Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR)

Advanced Placement (AP)

American College Test (ACT)

American Community Survey (ACS)

Bowen Family Systems Theory (BFST)

Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID)

Classification Tree Analysis (CTA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

General Education Development (GED)

Grade Point Average (GPA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Institute of Health (NIH)

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

Youth Engaged in Service (YES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

High school graduation and chronic absenteeism of African American male students are intractable problems affecting high school graduation rates nationally (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Chapter One will describe the historical events that led to the formation of absent father households in African American families. This research examined reasons for chronic absenteeism and graduation variances between African American males with absent fathers and present fathers. This chapter will outline the academic achievement and chronic absenteeism challenges that have affected African American males with absent fathers. This study investigated the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The objective of this study was to develop new academic interventions, mentoring programs, paternal involvement programs, and attendance programs to increase the graduation rates and decrease the chronic absenteeism rates for African American males. In addition, this chapter presents the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose statement, the research questions, and the significance of the study.

Background

The composition of African American households is generally different compared to the traditional nuclear family systems of most Americans (Keller & Noone, 2020; Klever, 2015). Research has revealed that the residual effects of slavery have been identified as a key factor in the disorganization and instability of African American families today. Enslaved African American men were customarily sold and removed from their families; thus, their function in the family was often more biological than social or financial (Causey et al., 2015). Slavery may have undermined the formation and permanency of marriage, as well as the leadership roles of African

American fathers in their families (Brereton, 2015). Slavery, therefore, may have disrupted all family bonds except for mother and child, leading to a pattern of African American families centered on the mother.

In lieu of slavery, researchers have asserted that African American households in the late nineteenth century were father-headed family systems. In contrast, to the post-emancipation family, African American families underwent significant changes during Jim Crow, the Great Depression, and World War II, resulting in high rates of widowhood, unemployment, food insecurity, discrimination, and poor economic conditions that altered the household (Franklin & James, 2015). Although slavery disrupted the cultural traditions and family relationships that African Americans had grown up with, it did not eliminate the value of kinship and extended family, which plays a critical role in providing additional family support for fatherless African American males (Brereton, 2015; McCahon-Whiting, 2016). The extended and kinship family network has survival implications for African American single mothers, who represent a larger percentage of families in the lower socioeconomic class. The survival of the African American father-absent households lies in their African roots. Research data has indicated that rates of father-absent households declined to their lowest level in 1950 to 17.4%, only to continually rise after substantial family formation problems and African American urbanization to the North and West (Ricketts, 2015).

The percentage of African American children living in father-absent households rose to 21.7% in 1960, 37.8% in 1980, 49.3% in 2000, 54.6% in 2010, and 65.3% in 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). This timeframe also corresponds to increases in the number of children born to unwed mothers, high rates of paternal homicide, mass incarceration, and divorce. Widespread changes in African American families, along with low graduation, low marriageability of African

American men and economic factors led to the rise in households with absent fathers (Causey et al., 2015; Ricketts, 2015). Researchers have found that absent fathers may cause detrimental changes in the family, impacting graduation and absenteeism (Anderson, 2014; Gottfried, 2017). Moreover, the composition of the family system has been linked to differences in academic achievement and absenteeism of adolescents with emotionally cutoff fathers as compared to adolescents with present fathers (Langa, 2014). Drawing on Bowen family systems theory's (BFST) concept of emotional cutoff, this study investigated the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation.

Bowen (1978) defined emotional cutoff as a process of separation, isolation, withdrawal from, running away, and denying the importance of the family. For this study, emotionally cutoff fathers will be used synonymously with absent fathers, by definition only. BFST assumes that families are interconnected units that consist of interdependent members not understood in isolation but as an integral part of a family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). The physical and emotional absence of a father causes the family system to move towards dysfunction (Xu et al., 2019). Bowen's theory explains the complexity of families and the patterns of behaviors guiding the family. BFST is appropriate for this study due to its ability to focus on different types of households, strengths, and roles that exist within African American families (Erdem & Safi, 2018). Lastly, BFST allows the framework to consider the cultural characteristics of families with absent fathers and how absent fathers impact graduation and chronic absenteeism of African American male students. The composition of African American households and the number of unexcused absences can indicate other problems within the family system.

Researchers have suggested that the cultural and familial backgrounds of the African American family play a significant role in the chronic absenteeism of African American male

students (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012; Peleg et al., 2016). In African American household compositions with absent fathers, grandmothers are often the backbone support for the mother and the children. However, when grandmothers are sick, and mothers have to work, adolescents step in as caregivers and miss school. Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) argued that missed school days in single-mother or multigenerational households, which is most common in African American families, could be related to adolescents taking on a sibling-care or elder-care role. Further, chronic absenteeism for African American adolescents from father-absent households can be related to adolescents taking on a job to help the family financially (Chee et al., 2014). Several characteristics of household compositions with absent fathers have been identified as risk factors to chronic absenteeism, such as inconsistent discipline at home, poverty, medical conditions, disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions, academic problems, having a large family of four or more children, and nontraditional work schedules of mothers. Chronic absenteeism is a secondary complication of absent fathers since mothers have to take on extra responsibilities, as they cannot always closely monitor their children.

Although chronic absenteeism is a societal problem that occurs throughout schooling, it is most prevalent in kindergarten and high school (Davis et al., 2019; Gottfried, 2019). For instance, during the 2017-2018 academic school year, 29% of African American high school students missed 18 or more days from school (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In 2016, over 30% of students in nearly 800 school districts missed more than three weeks of school. Chronic absenteeism occurs when students miss 10% of instructional time or 18 school days per year, including excused and unexcused absences, and it has been called a nationwide crisis. Chronic absenteeism among low-income students of color, especially African American students, has been shown to be the leading cause of school disengagement, low graduation rates,

and high dropout rates (Hoff et al., 2015). Moreover, chronic absenteeism has cumulative effects that result in academic and social-emotional problems in later grades. The long-term effects of chronic absenteeism include unemployment, criminal involvement, and failure to graduate (Davis et al, 2019; Gottfried, 2014).

Research has demonstrated that African American male students from absent father households have lower rates of high school completion (Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014). Specifically, research from 1960 to present-day shows that African American males from absent father households are more likely to score poorly on intelligence tests and state high school exit examinations, drop out of school, and exhibit delinquent behaviors that prohibit high school graduation (Cobb-Clark & Tekin, 2014). Research has also indicated that low test scores, low student engagement, low academic motivation, low-grade point averages (GPAs), high rates of grade retention, high rates of out-of-school suspensions, high rates of expulsions, and high dropout rates are major factors that are exacerbated when African American male students live in absent father household compositions (Amato et al., 2015; Ganao et al., 2013). Substantial academic variances have been noted in research between African American males with absent fathers and African American males with present fathers across every aspect of the educational experience: grades, attainment of a high school diploma, dropout, special education placements, chronic absenteeism, and performance on standardized tests (Amato et al., 2015; Banks, 2017; Bauer et al., 2018; Powers et al., 2016; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014; Suh et al, 2014)

Father absenteeism is not a uniquely African American phenomenon; it occurs in all demographic groups. The composition of African American families has been identified as a factor of low graduation for fatherless African American males when compared to males from all other subgroups. In terms of inequalities in education, the intersection between social and racial

backgrounds and gender has been a prominent theme across the United States. African American males appear most susceptible to the adverse educational effects of absent fathers (Boothroyd & Cross, 2017). The vulnerability of males from absent father households has been identified as early as age three. In 2018, the national adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) was 85%. The ACGR for high school students in South Carolina was 81% for the 2017–2018 academic school year (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In 2018, South Carolina’s ACGR was 77.2% for African American males, Hispanic males (79.9%), Caucasian males (82.3%), American Indian males (70.3%), and Asian Pacific Islander males (91.3%; South Carolina Department of Education, 2019). The ACGR for African American males was second only to American Indian males.

In the United States today, African American males from absent father households face a gender gap in education. Research data from the U.S. Department of Education (2019) indicate that in public school education and all other demographic male and female subgroups, African American males are the least likely to secure a diploma four years after starting high school. The increased prevalence of absent father households also exacerbates contact with a stable male parent or role model. It may have a particularly negative impact on African American male students, thus contributing to the growing gender gap in graduation (Autor & Wasserman, 2013). However, males are more vulnerable to the loss of paternal time or a role model of the same-sex parent. Also, African American male students are less likely than females to finish high school, enroll in college, and complete a four-year college degree.

In contrast to fatherless African American males, African American males from present father households are more likely to graduate from high school and have been shown to have significantly higher education attainment. In a study conducted by Cowan et al. (2014), the

researchers found that students from present father household compositions perform better academically and socially than students from absent father household compositions, and they exhibit fewer behavioral problems. Students living with both parents tend to perform better academically since they often have more access to financial resources, computers, books, paternal involvement, and the internet than students from household compositions with emotionally cutoff fathers. Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2014) conducted a study that revealed that African American males with present fathers are four times less likely to be suspended from school than African American males with absent fathers. Since males with absent fathers have higher out-of-school suspension rates than males with present fathers, it can be reasoned that out-of-school suspension impacts chronic absenteeism rates and graduation rates.

Researchers have focused on absent father households, dropout rates, and academic underachievement as reasons for declining graduation rates for African American males (Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014; Simmons et al., 2018; Suh et al., 2014). Negative factors associated with father absence in the lives of African American males include decreases in social-emotional skills, academic motivation, and behavioral development, which eventually leads to dropout (Haskins, 2014). Further, research on the educational impact of father absence has found associations with low education attainment, grade retention, and low GPAs (Finn et al., 2014). Other studies have indicated that growing up with only one biological parent (usually the mother) reduces a student's opportunity of graduating high school by 40% (Amato et al., 2015).

The absence of one's biological father has been shown to affect a child's reading and math test scores, which could ultimately impact graduation (Amato et al., 2015; Finn et al., 2014). African American male students with emotionally cutoff fathers have reflected adversities that alter their educational experience and social trajectories. Moreover, African American values,

culture, and familial education experiences influence chronic absenteeism rates and graduation rates (Anderson, 2014; Gottfried, 2017; Klever, 2015). However, there is a lack of research data on the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. Prior research on chronic absenteeism and household composition has focused on truancy. Most school districts did not report chronic absenteeism rates until 2015 when the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed. Thus, research studies on chronic absenteeism, household compositions, and graduation lack depth. Currently, there is a concern that African American males with absent fathers have higher chronic absenteeism rates when compared to other subgroups and African American males with present fathers; these students are not graduating at the same rate as African Americans with present fathers or other subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Problem Statement

Students of color, specifically males, face significant challenges in education. African American males, on average, are less academically successful than other racial/ethnic subgroups, including African American females. Today, African American males experience social and cultural hardships while navigating through high school. Cultural hardships can be traced back to slavery, which destroyed the formation of African American families (Brereton, 2015; Causey et al., 2015) African American males with absentee fathers are often academically disadvantaged, lacking financial resources, paternal involvement, and discipline, while attending Title I schools. Societal hardships such as systemic racism, discrimination, negative stereotyping, and racial profiling affect African American male students' encounters with law enforcement officers, school engagement, academic motivation, and self-esteem (Capper, 2015). The hardships extend to other areas of their lives, impacting their family compositions, school absences, and high

school completion (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Current literature in the fields of social science and education suggests that households with emotionally cutoff fathers negatively influence educational attainment and absenteeism for African American males (Amato et al., 2015; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). The graduation rates of African American males with absent fathers are even lower than the national average graduation rates for African American males. The educational achievement gap between African American male students with absent fathers and students with present fathers in the United States is among the largest, at 27 points, comparable to one year's worth of learning (Curtis et al., 2017). African American males have the lowest graduation rates and the highest chronic absenteeism among all demographic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In a study conducted in California, the findings revealed that nearly half of the African American males in Oakland Unified School District were in danger of not earning a high school diploma due to high rates of chronic absenteeism (Kapor Center, 2017).

Since the start of compulsory education, absenteeism has been a concern that educators and school counselors have identified as a persistent problem facing school districts across the United States (Gottfried & Hutt, 2019). In 2018, 29% of African American high school students missed 18 or more days from school. African American students from low-income households with absent fathers were more likely to have chronic absences from school compared to students with present fathers and higher incomes (Lim et al., 2019). Chronic absenteeism is cumulative, and it has an adverse effect on social skills, school readiness, dropout, graduation, and grade retention (Bauer et al., 2018). In sum, African American male students with absent fathers experience the poorest educational outcomes in terms of chronic absenteeism and graduation.

The current study was warranted because previous research studies have linked

graduation and chronic absenteeism singly with household compositions that include absent fathers in the nuclear family system. The gap in the literature has been identified as a lack of available research studies, specifically, studies that have evaluated the household composition, graduation, and chronic absenteeism using a targeted population of African American males. This research study examined six variables: graduation, household composition, chronic absenteeism, gender, race, and income, given that no research study has explored all the variables within one study. Therefore, a gap in knowledge exists in the literature. The problem that was addressed in this study is the lack of available research data on the household composition of African American males, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The literature supports that African American male students with absent fathers have low rates of graduation and are more likely to be chronically absent (Bauer et al., 2018; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. By examining the relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation of African American male students in South Carolina high schools, this research study gathered evidence that may inspire changes to culturally relevant teaching and new learning strategies. Ideally, this research study will provide a foundation to develop new academic interventions, mentorship programs, attendance programs, and paternal involvement programs to decrease chronic absenteeism and increase graduation for African American male students. Research studies on the household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation in a single study have not yet been explored; therefore, this study addressed that gap in knowledge. Additionally, this research study sought to identify the factors that best

differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions.

The archival data on graduation and chronic absenteeism were collected from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) by the nine-digit zip codes using PowerSchool, which is a data collection tool used by South Carolina school districts. In addition, archival data on household composition and the median household income were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau by the nine-digit zip codes using the American Community Survey (ACS). This 44-item national survey collects data on household composition and household income. The archival data were used to test the relationship between household compositions of African American males, chronic absenteeism, and graduation and to identify the factors that best differentiate students with single-mother households from students with two-parent households.

The independent variables in this study are household composition, income, gender, and race. Household composition is divided into two categories based on imputed data: single-mother and two-parent. Household composition refers to all the people occupying a housing unit who are related to the householder by marriage, birth, or adoption (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). The median household income divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019a). For this study, income refers to above \$62,028 or below \$62,028. Gender refers to male or female. Race refers to the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups based on inherited physical characteristics and distinct differences (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The dependent variables are chronic absenteeism and graduation. Graduation is the act of receiving a diploma or a degree from a school, college, or university at a ceremony (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Chronic absenteeism involves missing 10% or more (18 days per year) of the

academic-school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences (Hoff et al., 2015).

Significance of the Study

This study may be significant to SCDE policymakers, administrators, school counselors, and educators, as well as African American males and community agencies. From a theoretical perspective, the current study may contribute to the literature on BFST by providing a deeper understanding of African American families in the context of nuclear family systems that are experiencing emotionally cutoff fathers. Additionally, this study may expand the literature on BFST by providing an understanding of human behavior and interactions in the context of the familial nuclear system, which may aid in finding solutions that could lead to higher graduation rates and lower chronic absenteeism rates for African American male students with absent fathers. Also, African American male students may gain knowledge of how absent fathers may impact their graduation, chronic absenteeism, employment opportunities, and financial stability.

This study is significant to African American males, as it will investigate the impact of absent father households on their chronic absenteeism and graduation rates, which could affect their financial stability and employment stability. The employment rate for young adult high school completers is 67% and 51% for those who did not complete high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017a). Research data from 2017 shows that the median annual earnings of young high school completers were \$33,000, which is \$8,000 higher than the median annual earnings of those without a diploma (McFarland et al., 2017). The unemployment rate for African American males is substantially higher than that of other subgroups and gender, a fact that reflects, to some extent, a pattern of systemic racism that has constrained African American males' labor market opportunities (Neumark, 2018). This study may inform advocacy programs

from a social services and labor board perspective to help individuals understand that a high school diploma will lead to better employment and financial opportunities. The U.S. Census Bureau (2018) reported that 25.9% of individuals without a high school diploma lived in poverty, whereas 14% of individuals with only a high school diploma lived in poverty.

School counselors and educators may be able to use this study to develop new academic interventions to increase graduation rates for African American males with absent fathers. The interventions could focus on increasing GPAs by offering extra instruction in the core subjects that they are failing. Understanding the key factors that contribute to the chronic absenteeism of African American male students may help administrators and school counselors incorporate mentoring and attendance programs within South Carolina schools and, in turn, decrease chronic absences for fatherless African American males. Balfanz and Byrnes (2013) found that students who were enrolled in mentoring programs regained two weeks of school. In some cases, students regained more than a month of school. Balfanz and Byrnes confirmed reasons such as increased school attendance and better grades for developing mentoring programs in schools. Essentially, mentors provide fatherless students with positive role models who may fulfill some of the roles left by absent fathers (Godfrey & Manis, 2017).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students?

RQ2: What factors best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions?

H₀1: There is no statistically significant relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students.

H₀2: There are no factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions.

Definitions

ACGR: ACGR is the percentage of public high school students who graduate with a regular diploma within four years of starting ninth grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Chronic absenteeism: Chronic absenteeism is missing ten percent or more (18 days per year) of the academic-school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences (Hoff et al., 2015).

Emotional cutoff: Emotional cutoff is the process of separation, isolation, withdrawal from, running away, or denying the importance of family relationships (Bowen, 1978).

Father-absent household composition: Father-absent household composition is defined as a family in which the biological father does not live in the household with the son and the biological mother (Anderson, 2014).

Graduation: Graduation is the act of receiving a diploma or degree from a school, college, or university; a ceremony at which degrees or diplomas are issued (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Summary

Chapter One highlighted the research topic studied while detailing specific reasons this research study is necessary. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The independent variables in this study are household composition, gender, income, and race. The dependent variables are chronic absenteeism and graduation. Archival data were from the SCDE and the U.S. Census Bureau. CTA was used during the data analysis process.

This study is important because nationally, African American male students have the highest chronic absenteeism rates and the lowest graduation rates among all demographic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Chronic absences are the highest for low-income, inner-city, African American males living in father-absent households. The effects of father absence have been more severe on African American male students because males are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of absent fathers and the economic disadvantage than females. Furthermore, a substantial achievement gap between African American males with absent fathers and African American males with present fathers in the United States is among the largest, at 27 points, comparable to one year's worth of learning. African American male students with absent fathers have lower GPAs and are more likely to repeat a grade and miss school compared to African American male students with present fathers on a national level. In addition, African American male students are the least likely to obtain a high school diploma after four years of high school.

Without a high school diploma and a history of chronic absenteeism, African American male students with absent fathers may experience financial instability and limited employment opportunities. Twenty-six percent of people without a high school diploma were shown to live in poverty, opposed to 14% of people with only a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The median annual earnings of young high school completers are \$8,000.00 higher than young adults without a high school diploma in 2017. The African American unemployment rate for males (10.6%) is higher when compared to males of other subgroups. Regarding father absence, the absence of a father has been found to be detrimental to the social, behavioral, and educational development of African American male students (Huang et al., 2017; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014). This study addressed the problem with low graduation rates and high chronic absenteeism rates of African American male students with absent fathers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive literature review of research studies relating to household compositions, graduation, and chronic absenteeism for African American males. As noted, absent fathers are a complex societal problem that has adverse effects on the educational experience of African American males: high rates of chronic absenteeism, high rates of dropout, high rates of out-of-school suspension, and high rates of grade retention. This chapter describes the literature on underlying factors that contribute to chronic absenteeism and low graduation rates. The rates of absent father households continue to increase, regardless of the repercussions on education attainment, social-emotional skills, and behavioral development. Chapter Two reviews and synthesizes the research pertaining to specific reasons for a father's absence. The literature will identify key factors that increase graduation rates and decrease chronic absenteeism for African American males. BFST posits that the ineffective handling of emotions and anxiety within families are the main causes leading to dysfunction in the family subsystems (Bowen, 1978).

Bowen Family Systems Theory

BFST was developed from extensive research conducted by Murray Bowen from 1946 to 1978. BFST consists of eight interlocking concepts: sibling position, emotional cutoff, societal emotional process, differentiation of self, family projection process, nuclear family emotional processes, multigenerational transmission process, and triangles. A triangle refers to a three-person emotional relationship system. In this study, triangles consist of the mother, the child, and the absent father. The concept of emotional cutoff will be discussed and explored. Specifically, the term cutoff refers to the emotional discontinuation in a relationship whereby meaningful

contact becomes limited or nonexistent. Absent fathers are cutoff from their children due to their inability to be present in their children's lives daily. This study investigated the relationship between household composition (single-mother and two-parent), chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students.

Bowen's (1978) family systems is a theory of human behavior and interaction that views the family as an interrelated unit. Family members in a family system are interconnected, in which dysfunction or anxiety in one subsystem or family member affects the entire family system; incarceration, divorce, and death are followed by changes in academic achievement and school absences in adolescents (Haskins, 2014; Sapharas et al., 2016). BFST evolved over the span of 32 years through extensive clinical research starting in 1946.

In the 1940s, Bowen's research at the Menninger Clinic on families with schizophrenic offspring provided background information on the emotional process of separation between adolescents and their families. Between 1959 and 1978, Bowen led multiple family systems projects while researching at the National Institute of Health (NIH) and Georgetown University Family Center. The clinical research at Georgetown University and NIH was conducted with children and nonschizophrenic adolescents and their families, which were also beneficial to the development of his theory and deepened his understanding of family systems and how they interact and function. Bowen's clinical observations led to the development of what is known today as BFST (Bowen, 1978).

This comprehensive theory of human functioning and behavior is based on 32 years of clinical observations, during which he focused on family patterns and interactions that existed between family members. Bowen noticed certain repetitive patterns of dysfunction and anxiety within families (Bowen, 1978; Keller & Noone, 2020). He developed a framework that could

give a clearer understanding of how individuals behave and interact when involved in a family system (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Bowen viewed the family as an interrelated unit. Family members in a family system are interconnected, in which dysfunction, anxiety, or both in one subsystem and family member affects the entire family system: unemployment, incarceration, poverty, divorce, and death are followed by changes in academic outcomes and school absences in adolescents (Haskins, 2014; Sapharas et al., 2016). Bowen's concept of emotional cutoff was reviewed in this study.

Specifically, this study attempted to confirm BFST's concept of emotional cutoff. In 1975, Bowen added an emotional cutoff as the eighth concept. This concept reiterated his earlier concept of emotional distance as a way to reduce the emotional intensity and anxiety in familial relationships. Emotionally cutoff fathers from the family system change the dynamics of the familial unit; thus, affecting chronic absenteeism rates and graduation rates of adolescents. BFST is an appropriate theory to use in this study, as it presents the relationship between household compositions of African American males with emotionally cutoff fathers, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. Keller and Noone (2020) asserted that growing up with an emotionally cutoff father can progressively lead African American male students to increments in misbehavior, grade retention, failure to graduate, and eventually drop out (. BFST was incorporated into the current research study by reviewing Bowen's concept of emotional cutoff, which is the process of separation, isolation, or withdrawal from, running away, or denying the importance of family relationships (Bowen, 1978).

The family has three familial subsystems: marital conflict, dysfunction in one spouse, and dysfunction of a child that describes the family's emotional dynamics and interactions (Alzoubi, 2018). Bowen (1978) suggested that when anxiety occurs within one family member, either

through conflict or emotional cutoff, other members in the family system are inevitably affected. The emotional and physical absence of a father causes the entire family system to move toward dysfunction (Xu et al., 2019). Bernardi and Radl (2014) reported that adolescents who have experienced a paternal separation or divorce are less likely to graduate. Similarly, Brand et al. (2019) found that adolescents of divorced families were 26% more likely to drop out of high school than adolescents raised in nondivorced families. Nicholas and Loper (2012) reported that adolescents with incarcerated fathers have a higher rate of chronic absenteeism and lower graduation rates. Also, Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) concluded that adolescents from absent father households, on average, miss more days from school. In BFST, the emotional dynamics and interactions in the familial subsystem result in adolescents taking on adult stressors and anxiety that affect other areas of their lives, such as behavior, academic functioning, and school attendance (Sheehan & Friedlander, 2015).

Bowen (1978) posited that specific characteristics in families (poverty, anxiety, emotional dysfunction, and father absence) are predictive of adverse educational outcomes. In the current study, Bowen's concept of emotional cutoff was reviewed. This study proposed to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. Bowen was revolutionary in the fields of education and counseling since he was the first to consider the individual's behaviors as an aftereffect of their interrelated family (Klever, 2015). BFST has been used to research academic performance, test anxiety, and graduation (Haefner, 2014; Kerr, 2013; Peleg et al., 2016).

Father Absenteeism and Graduation Rates

Father absenteeism has reached epic proportions, causing changes in the dynamics and interactions of the family system (De Matteis, 2017). A family system is an interconnected unit,

and anxiety in one subsystem, such as dysfunction in one spouse, results in changes in other family members. Therefore, incarceration, death, and divorce have adverse effects on graduation rates for African American male students (Sapharas et al., 2016; Wildeman, 2014). Sheehan and Friedlander (2015) found empirical evidence that indicates that father absence due to incarceration lowers the GPAs of adolescents, thus decreasing graduation rates. Furthermore, father absence through incarceration has deleterious long-term consequences for each family member, including low educational attainment, misbehavior, unemployment, and poverty (Haskins, 2014; Xu et al., 2019).

Numerous researchers have suggested that absent father households have adverse effects on graduation rates for African American males, which implies that financial contributions along with emotional support and paternal involvement play an important role in the lives of African American males (Monserud & Elder, 2013; Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2014) revealed that African American males living in absent father households obtained lower GPAs, lower standardized test scores, and lower academic achievement compared to African American males living in present father households. Additionally, graduation rates for African American males with emotionally cutoff fathers were affected by other factors such as parenting style, family dysfunction, divorce, poverty, disengagement, and low academic motivation (Brand et al., 2019; Haskins, 2014).

De Lange et al. (2014) indicated that the percentage of absent father household compositions of schools impacts the educational achievement of children from absent father and present father households. De Lange et al. found that growing up in a single-mother household in urban communities with a high percentage of households with absent fathers has adverse consequences for high school completion and attributes to widespread poverty, deficits in social

skills, misbehavior, and unsupervised children (De Lange et al., 2014). Balfanz and Byrnes (2013) reported that low-income, inner-city African American children from single-mother households arrive late to school more often, affecting their instructional time and chronic absenteeism rates. Additionally, Hoff et al. (2015) concluded that chronic absenteeism is higher among low-income African American males. The researchers found chronic absenteeism to be the leading cause of school disengagement, dropout, and school failure (Hoff et al., 2015).

Bowen Family Systems Theory and Chronic Absenteeism Rates

In BFST, the root cause of chronic absenteeism is embedded within the dysfunction and dynamics of the family (Breda, 2014; Keller & Noone, 2020). The familial system has three relationship patterns, and tension may rest within any family subsystem. If one of the relationship patterns experiences stress or anxiety, then each member of the familial system is affected (Bowen, 1978). Specifically, out-of-school suspension exacerbates the instability of absent father households because the student must be supervised while on suspension, and it also contributes to high chronic absenteeism rates. Melander et al. (2017) indicated that chronic absences be an indicator of a student's well-being and an indicator of other problems and dysfunction within the family. Melander et al.'s study also confirmed prior studies on families and chronic absenteeism rates and found that 75% of students who are chronically absent by grade six will not graduate high school. In addition, Stempel et al. (2017) determined that absent father household compositions contributed to chronic absenteeism, which showed a complex range of problems within the family. Keller and Noone (2020) posited that chronic absenteeism is a direct result of dysfunction in the household.

Research consistently shows that changes in the household composition, including divorce, death, and incarceration, can spill over into the classroom, affecting chronic absenteeism

(Nicholas & Loper, 2012). Several factors have been known to contribute to chronic absenteeism rates for adolescents with absent fathers, such as familial dysfunction, transportation, food insecurity, lack of parental supervision, irregular work schedules, and academic problems (Brown & Alexander, 2014; Klever, 2016). In some cases, fatherless African American adolescents may be forced to take care of younger siblings instead of attending schools (Chee et al., 2014). Missing school to take care of a younger sibling is common, mostly in low-income father-absent households, because the mother needs to work to financially provide for the household. Lim et al. (2019) found that African American males with absent fathers are 60% more likely to be chronically absent from school; thus, leading to poor academic functioning, school disengagement, and eventual dropout.

Chronic absenteeism is associated with reduced instructional time, low GPAs, no credit for class participation, and missed homework assignments, which could lead to dropout (Rafa, 2017). Moreover, chronic absenteeism is a stronger predictor of dropout than low grades (Stempel et al., 2017). Previous studies reported a reduction in chronic absenteeism when school counselors, families, and educators worked together and created a positive and safe school environment that motivated students to show up on time daily to avoid absences (Campbell, 2015; Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). However, father absence within a household may lead to increments in chronic absenteeism for African American males. Chronic absenteeism rates are connected to the current functioning of the family unit (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2013; Davis et al., 2019). Researchers have suggested that father absence is linked to low educational attainment, social-emotional difficulties, and deficiencies in behavioral development (Brooks, 2015; Hung et al., 2017; Markowitz & Ryan, 2016; Monahan et al., 2014; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014; Squires et al., 2015).

Review of Literature

The Impact of Absent Fathers

The impact of absent fathers may lead to deficits in behavior, social-emotional skills, and academic underachievement. African American male students from absent father households are generally at risk for school failure, behavior problems, absenteeism, and disproportionately high referrals to special education programs (Banks, 2017; Bauer et al, 2018; Haskins, 2014; Turney, 2017). Further, fatherless African American males tend to have poor relationships with their biological father, and they may experience academic problems and harsher punitive discipline for minor infractions (Ganao et al., 2013; Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). Owens (2016) linked low test scores and GPAs to absent fathers. African American male students who reside in absent father household compositions demonstrate poor social-emotional skills, engage in criminal activity, and exhibit higher levels of irritability and aggressiveness (Kopak & Smith-Ruiz, 2016; Markowitz & Ryan, 2016).

Social-emotional Impact

Absent father household compositions weaken the emotional regulation and compromise the physical and emotional security of African American male students. Huang et al. (2017) revealed that males from previous research studies expressed feelings of rejection and abandonment when their fathers were not involved in their lives. Their feelings of inadequacy and abandonment play a role in the perception of their school experiences, which affects their academic outcomes and absences. McLanahan et al. (2013) found a strong correlation between the negative effects of absent fathers and social-emotional development through high levels of externalizing behaviors. Externalizing behaviors are directed toward the external environment and include destroying property, physical aggression, vandalism, and disobedience (Wildeman,

2014). The externalizing behaviors start as early as three-years-old and may continue into adolescence, precipitating an increase in out-of-school suspensions, placing fatherless African American males at risk physically and emotionally.

The emotional effects of father absence might be more prominent if the absence occurred early in childhood rather than late childhood. In early childhood, children do not have the emotional or mental capacity to work through the traumatic experience of losing a father. Social-emotional development is the extent to which young children learn to have successful social interactions with peers, siblings, parents, and other adults and can communicate their emotions effectively to achieve their goals without adverse interactions (Squires et al., 2015). African American males from father-absent households are significantly more likely to have underdeveloped social-emotional skills that affect behavior, grade retention, and educational trajectory (Huang et al., 2017; Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). Numerous researchers have presented substantial evidence that absent father households impact the educational and social experience of African American males well before high school (Hughes et al, 2018; Hung et al, 2017; Squires et al., 2015). In some cases, as early as first grade, the deficits in social-emotional skills (i.e., emotional regulation, impulse control, and interactions with adults and peers) impact early grade retention, behavior, chronic absences, and educational outcomes (Haskins & Turney, 2017; Powers et al., 2016).

The social-emotional impact of father absence on African American males can last a lifetime, affecting their financial stability, career opportunities, and educational attainment. Research shows that African American males with absent fathers may experience a reduction in school adjustment, social-emotional skills, and school readiness (Haskins, 2014; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014; Single-Rushton & McLanahan, 2014). Amato et al. (2015) asserted that fathers

are important sources of social-emotional development for African American males because they share the same gender. However, fatherless African American males have fewer opportunities to learn social-emotional skills from a male perspective.

On average, African American male students with married parents have better social-emotional skills than males in all other family types (Amato et al., 2015). Therefore, the presence of a father is paramount for African American males' social-emotional development. Baker (2017) indicated that the presence of warmth, support, and love by a father predicted better social-emotional skills. In the study, African American male students with fathers who engage in more warmth had higher attention scores and experienced significant gains in reading and math (Baker, 2017). Those with present fathers manifested fewer incidents of misbehaviors and had higher social-emotional scores and higher school engagement scores. The findings suggest that educators, families, and school counselors should focus on paternal involvement programs that address the familial factors that affect the social-emotional development of African American males (Baker, 2017). However, African American males' social-emotional connectedness rarely reaches its full potential when fathers are absent, leaving them with social-emotional deficiencies that last a lifetime (Huang et al., 2017). In addition to social-emotional difficulties, father absenteeism impacts other areas of African American male students' lives, including behavior.

Behavioral Impact of Absent Fathers

The impact of living in absent father households manifests itself in African American males in numerous ways. Studies have shown that males from absent father households have the highest odds of being incarcerated, highest levels of school failure, and are more likely to be suspended (Anyon et al., 2016; Davis, 2017). The emotional and physical absence of fathers can impact aggression, irritability, and poor self-regulation, putting African American male students

at a higher risk of delinquent behavior or future criminal activity and a higher chance of going into a juvenile detention center (Markowitz & Ryan, 2016; Monahan et al., 2014). Gibson and Haight (2013) examined out-of-school suspension rates for lower-income caregivers of African American males in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, which is among the top ten states with the highest out-of-school suspension rates for African American males, undeniably attributing to racial and educational inequalities. Findings revealed that African American males with absent fathers had a higher rate of out-of-school suspensions and were three times more likely to be suspended when compared to males with present fathers (Gibson & Haight, 2013).

Household composition, specifically father-absent household, is predictive of delinquent behaviors that interfere with academic achievement, graduation, and chronic absenteeism (Markowitz & Ryan, 2016). Growing up without a father in the household deprives African American males of a second parent who may guide their behaviors through high school (Browne & Battle, 2018). Simmons et al. (2018) investigated the effects of absent fathers on delinquency and reported that students from absent father household compositions (3.11%) were more delinquent and engaged in more severe cases of delinquent behaviors than students from present father household compositions (2.58%). The absence of fathers in the lives of African American males is a societal concern because of the rate at which they are filling juvenile detention centers, prisons, and their academic underachievement (Arkes, 2015; Samuel, 2015).

African American males with absent fathers had the highest juvenile detention rate when compared to African American males with present fathers (Tremblay et al., 2017). Empirical research evidence shows that absent father household compositions have been associated with gang affiliation, delinquent behavior, verbal abuse, aggression, and violence (Gylnn, 2014; Wildeman, 2014). African American males from absent father households are more likely to join

gangs while searching for a sense of belonging and validation. Through gang affiliation, males find a sense of community and acceptance (Gylmn, 2014; Leath, 2017). However, gang leaders may replace absent fathers within their new social families and often mislead members to anti-social behaviors and no time to attend school or graduate (Gylmn, 2014). The composition of absent father households creates an opportunity for African American male students to engage in anti-social behaviors since mothers cannot constantly monitor their sons, and paternal discipline and involvement are nonexistent. In many cases, these absent father household compositions have consequences far beyond behavior. The most detrimental impact of absent fathers can be seen in the chronic absenteeism and graduation rates of African American males (Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014).

Educational Impact of Absent Fathers

Research shows that in African American males, father absence is associated with low GPAs, grade retention, low scores on high school state exit exams, and low graduation rates. Specifically, Amato et al. (2015) found that males from absent father households had lower test scores on math and verbal achievement tests compared to their counterparts from present father households. The differences in scores were prevalent among African American males. In 2016, math and reading test scores among African American males with absent fathers averaged 28 points lower than scores of African American males with present fathers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017b). During the same year, African American males with absent fathers in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades earned reading scores 43 points lower than males with present fathers (Musu-Gillette, 2017).

Additionally, performance on the American College Test (ACT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) has proven to be significantly lower for fatherless African American males than for

African American males from present father households. In 2018, the average ACT composite score in South Carolina was 18.7. For African American males, the average ACT composite score was 18.1 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018a). The average SAT score for South Carolina was 1089, and the average SAT score for African American males in South Carolina was 908 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2018b). The scores indicate a significant gap in achievement among African American males from absent father households. One major factor that affects graduation rates among African American male students is the presence of a biological father in the household (Huynh-Hohnbaum et al., 2015). Paternal involvement is a protective factor for academic achievement and school attendance. The AGC for African American male students with absent fathers in 2017 was 52%, and the AGCR for African American male students was 78% (Musu-Gillette, 2017). Qureshi and Ahmad (2014) argued that African American male students with absent fathers have a greater risk of factors that affect graduation: disproportionate rates of out-of-school suspension, transportation issues, chronic absenteeism, insufficient access to the internet, lack of financial resources, and poverty. Regardless of the reason, incarceration, divorce, separation, or death, research data indicate that absent fathers negatively impact chronic absenteeism rates and graduation rates of African American male students.

Reasons for Father Absence

Incarceration

Over 1.5 million children in the United States currently have incarcerated fathers. Notably, African American male adolescents constitute 45% of children with incarcerated fathers (Gaston, 2016). As such, paternal incarceration contributes to high rates of absent father households, low high school completion, and chronic absences of African American males

(Jacobsen, 2019; Sykes & Pettit, 2014). High rates of incarceration among African American males, combined with high rates of fatherhood among those in prison, have contributed to the increases in absent father households (Turney, 2017; Wildeman, 2014). Research studies on paternal incarceration have identified numerous adverse effects on academic outcomes and absenteeism for African American males, including low GPAs, academic underachievement, and skipping school (Haskins, 2014; Jacobsen, 2019; Wildeman & Western, 2014). Haskins (2014) claimed that the lack of school readiness and low GPAs are factors that decrease academic achievement and graduation among African American male students with incarcerated fathers.

Turney (2017) examined the impact of paternal incarceration on African American males' GPAs and found that African American males with a history of paternal incarceration had lower GPAs. Considering that GPA is a positive predictor of high school graduation, it can easily be understood how father absence, GPA, and low graduation rates are interconnected. African American male students with lower GPAs had a 47.5% graduation rate when their father was incarcerated for six or more years. Numerous research studies have documented that paternal incarceration has adverse consequences for young male students, and the consequences continue into high school, affecting their graduation (Huynh-Hohnbaum et al., 2015; Wildeman, 2014). Empirical evidence has consistently linked parental incarceration to academic underachievement, delinquency, chronic absences, adjustment difficulties, and misbehavior.

The consequences of paternal incarceration on graduation and chronic absences are more detrimental to older adolescents, as research states that paternal incarceration is associated with low school engagement, excessive absences from school, and dropout (Turney & Haskins, 2014). Adolescents of previously incarcerated or incarcerated fathers have higher rates of disciplinary referrals, lower educational attainment, poorer academic performance, and more school absences

than adolescents whose fathers were never incarcerated (Haskins, 2016; Haskins & Jacobsen, 2017). Moreover, African American males with incarcerated fathers have deficiencies in social-emotional skills, including aggression and irritability, which facilitates misbehavior, thus increasing chronic absenteeism and grade retention through punitive disciplinary practices: out-of-school suspension and expulsion (Haskins, 2014; Wildeman & Western, 2014).

Furthermore, paternal incarceration creates higher levels of anxiety and emotional stress within family systems due to the lack of daily contact with the father and the loss of income and support (Washington et al., 2017). Emotionally cut off fathers, through incarceration, change the dynamics of the family system. In essence, paternal incarceration disrupts the family systems by creating financial stress, which places children at risk for homelessness and academic failure, thus has a negative effect on dropout, graduation, grade retention, misbehavior, and chronic absences (Armon & Mikia, 2016; Huynh-Hohnbaum et al., 2015). The emotional and physical separation of paternal incarceration may be more harmful than death or divorce. Murray (2014) compared divorce with incarceration in that both incidents involve the loss of contact with a father and can happen unexpectedly and suddenly and the impact on school attendance and grades are more detrimental than death or divorce. Research has also shown that paternal incarceration diminishes the marital conflict and the dysfunction of a child subsystem along with any sense of family stability (Keller & Noone, 2020).

Divorce

Each year, over two million American children experience parental divorce and its negative effects on academic achievement, graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism (Arkes, 2015; Mandemakers & Kalmijn, 2014). A family system is an emotional unit and an interconnected singular entity. The Bible states that the spiritual well-being of adolescents is

interwoven with the integrity of the parents' marital well-being (1 Corinthians 7:14). Therefore, stressful life events within families, such as divorce, affect adolescents by increasing the risk of academic failure and chronic absences. Chronic absenteeism for adolescents of divorced parents may be partly explained by less monitoring by divorced parents. African American male students from divorced families tended to do more poorly in school compared to males from non-divorced families (Amato & Anthony, 2014; Anderson, 2014; Kalmijn, 2015). Mandemakers and Kalmijn (2014) also confirmed that adolescents whose parents divorced have lower GPAs, reading scores, and math scores compared to adolescents whose parents did not divorce.

Researchers have found that divorce is associated with low GPAs, academic underachievement, and missed school days (Amato & Anthony, 2014; Sapharas et al., 2016). Potter (2014) examined the relationship between psychosocial well-being, divorce, and the academic achievement of adolescents. The study was moderated by the effects of father absence after a divorce. Potter found that adolescents with divorced parents scored three to five points lower on reading and math tests when compared to adolescents with nondivorced parents. The GPAs of divorced adolescents averaged one point lower when compared to adolescents with nondivorced parents. The reading scores (14) and the math scores (10) decreased when divorce and academic achievement were mediated by father absence. Also, the psychosocial well-being of adolescents was reduced when parents were divorced. Overall, divorce and academic achievement were correlated with a decrease in GPAs, math scores, and reading scores (Potter, 2014).

However, Brand et al. (2019) offered an alternative perspective on the impact of divorce on the educational outcomes of African American male students. The researchers noted that African American families with a higher expectation of marital subsystem might have more

difficulties when divorce occurs because they are not prepared for the disruption to the family system, thus leading to severe changes in the educational outcomes of African American males. In contrast, divorced families who live at a disadvantage or in an unstable marital subsystem may not incur the same adverse educational outcomes because the disruption to the family system is normalized.

After a divorce, the quality and quantity of paternal involvement are reduced, and the father-son relationship gradually diminishes (Baker, 2017; Kalmijn, 2015). Additionally, adolescents are more likely to fail core subjects and be retained in a grade (Amato et al., 2015). Studies have shown that African American male students from divorced families have high dropout rates, low GPAs, and poor school attendance (Arkes, 2015; Kalmijn, 2015). Those from nondivorce parents with a consistently close relationship with their fathers were more likely to have higher GPAs when compared to those with divorced parents (Amato & Anthony, 2014; Anderson, 2014).

Death

As noted, in addition to divorce, paternal death negatively affects graduation and chronic absences of African American male students. Paternal death is a traumatic life event that has short-term and long-term effects on chronic absences and educational attainment (Prix & Erola, 2017; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016) reported that the top five causes of death among African American males in the United States are heart disease, cancer, stroke, unintentional injuries, and homicide. These causes contribute to the rates of absent father households among African American families. Research has indicated that paternal death through external causes such as homicide, suicide, or overdose is associated with adverse long-term educational outcomes for adolescents (Schoenfelder et al., 2015). Regarding

homicide, Schoenfelder et al. (2015) reported that students who have experienced a sudden paternal death by homicide had lower graduation rates, lower test scores, higher chronic absenteeism rates, and higher dropout rates when compared to nonbereaved students. Similarly, students who have been exposed to a paternal homicide had low GPAs and high-grade retention (Sapharas et al., 2016). Research shows that paternal death has had adverse effects on homework monitoring, chronic absenteeism, and dropout (Amato & Anthony, 2014; Doll et al., 2013; Nickerson et al., 2013)

Paternal death has also been found to negatively affect educational attainment, academic achievement, GPAs, reduced likelihood of high school enrolment, and graduation (Prix & Erola, 2017). For instance, Qureshi and Ahmad (2014) conducted a study to examine the relationship between academic performance and household types. The participants in the sample were divided into three subgroups: a deceased father with children, a divorced father with children, and an intact father with children. The researchers indicated that the father-present group had higher academic performance when compared to the divorced father group and the deceased father group (Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014). The findings suggest that father presence plays a significant role in the academic achievement of adolescents. In addition, researchers have consistently found that the psychological distress of losing a father is associated with lower educational attainment and higher chronic absences (Mandemakers & Kalmijn, 2014; Washington et al., 2017).

Berg et al. (2014) also investigated the association between paternal death and academic performance. The researchers used a sample from a Register-Based National Cohort Study to confirm previous research that examined the relationships between paternal death and academic performance to determine if similar associations would be found. The study found a positive

relationship between paternal death and school performance. Specifically, Berg et al. confirmed that paternal death during adolescence is associated with low grades and school failure. Sixty-five percent of adolescents who had experienced the death of a father had experienced school failure compared to 35% of adolescents with no paternal death. The mean GPAs were lower for males (3.08) than females (3.36), which implied that paternal death had more adverse effects on males (Berg et al., 2014). The results suggest that families and counselors need to work together on coping interventions to stabilize the academic outcomes of adolescents who have experienced a paternal death. Regardless of the reason, it is evident that paternal absence adversely affects the educational experience of fatherless African American males.

The Educational Experience of Fatherless African American Males

Isaiah 54:13 states that all the children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of children. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) started the process of equalizing education opportunities for all people in the United States regardless of race. However, previous research shows that school systems across the United States continue to struggle with the notion of education equality regarding socioeconomic status, household composition, and race (Capper, 2015). African American males, on average, are typically two grades behind Caucasian males (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). The issue of educational inequality is obvious in the statistics regarding dropout, punitive school discipline, and special education referrals with respect to race, income, and family composition (Ganao et al., 2013; Haskins, 2014; Suh et al., 2014). South Carolina had 260,164 African American students in 2018, about 33.6% of the student population. However, African American students make up 45% of expulsions and 58% of out-of-school suspensions. African American males are four times more likely to be suspended when compared to other racial/ethnic groups (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

African American males are the most vulnerable group of students within the educational system in the United States. In addition, African American males are the most overrepresented demographic group in special education programs and the most underrepresented group in gifted programs or advanced placement (AP) courses (Banks, 2017; Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017). Father absence is associated with numerous adversities, such as low test scores, poverty, grade retention, and misbehavior leading to out-of-school suspension and eventually dropout (Jackson et al., 2014; McCray et al., 2015). Absent fathers impact chronic absences and academic achievement of African American male students by decreasing school engagement, grades in core subjects, and academic motivation, thus leading to their failure to graduate (Amato et al., 2015; Brooks, 2015). Moreover, African American male students from father-absent household compositions are the least likely to graduate high school, which starts the downward trajectory to criminal activity, financial instability, and unemployment.

Graduating from high school begins the transition to official adulthood based on society's perspectives of the age of responsibility. Although the nation's high school graduation rate reached a historic high recently, African American male students are still the least likely to obtain a high school diploma (Brenchley, 2013). Every year in the United States, approximately 320,000 African American male students start ninth grade, but only 160,000 graduate high school (Rastegari & Shafer, 2017). Of the 160,000 who graduate, only 50,000 attend a four-year college. As such, African American male students do not have the best chance of being ready for the economy or the workforce. Without a high school diploma, African American males may face a lifetime of economic and employment hardships (Chmielewski & Reardon, 2016). These males encounter numerous obstacles as they navigate the school system across the United States,

including grade retention, chronic absenteeism, disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates, and dropout.

Dropout

Dropping out of high school increases negative outcomes for African American males, including employment hardships, criminal activity, incarceration, and financial instability.

Aratani and Cooper (2016) confirmed that African American male students who grow up without a father are more likely to become high school dropouts. The National Principals Association (2015) reported that 71% of all high school dropouts in the United States are from households without fathers. Adolescents with present fathers are 70% less likely to drop out of high school. The data for the National Principals Association report was collected from 12,000 high schools across the United States. Research studies have consistently revealed that dropout rates are higher among African American male students with absent fathers when compared to African American male students living with present fathers (Brand et al., 2019). The differences in the Brand et al. study were significant enough to confirm that father absence is the principal reason for the widening gap in dropout rates between African American male students and other demographics.

Suh et al. (2014) listed five factors that contribute to the African American male dropout gap: (1) out-of-school suspension, (2) grade retention, (3) parental educational level, (4) father absence, and (5) student-teacher relationships. Among the factors, out-of-school suspension, grade retention, father absence, and parental educational level were most responsible for creating the dropout gap between African American males. However, grade retention, poor student-teacher relationships, and out-of-school suspension were also linked to academic underachievement and chronic absenteeism, contributing to dropout (Suh et al., 2014). Although

dropout rates among most racial and ethnic subgroups have declined over the past 30 years, minority dropout rates (e.g., African American males) remain disproportionately high. Turney (2017) argued that out-of-school suspension and grade retention often expedite the dropout process for fatherless African American males.

Research has consistently shown that African American male students with absent fathers are more likely to drop out of school (Doll et al., 2013; McLanahan et al., 2013). Divorce, paternal death, and incarceration have been known to impact inconsistencies in homework monitoring and discipline, thus increasing dropout rates among African American males with absent fathers (Haskins, 2014; Sapharas et al., 2016). The National Center for Education Statistics (2017b) reported that dropout rates for African American males are as high as 60% in some major cities in the United States. In 2017, African American male students' dropout rate registered at 6.5%. African American males with absent fathers are at risk for absenteeism, misbehavior, and school disengagement, which exacerbates school failure and dropout (Haskins & Turney, 2014; Lim et al., 2019).

Dropping out of high school substantially influences low rates of graduation for African American male students from absent father households. Seven out of ten African American male student dropouts are from households without a father (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017b). Campell (2015) found that these students from absent father household compositions dropped out of school at a higher rate (7.5%) compared to the other demographic groups in the study. Research has also shown that out-of-school suspension, disengagement, low academic motivation, as well as chronic absenteeism contribute to the dropout rates of African American male students from absent father household compositions (Ahmad & Miller, 2015; Rafa, 2017). Hence, finding a solution that decreases dropout rates for African American males from absent

father household compositions is imperative.

Chronic Absenteeism

Over six million students were chronically absent (missing 18 days or more) from school in 2016 to 2017 academic-school year (Rafa, 2017). School attendance is a critical component of obtaining a high school diploma in the educational system in the United States. Chronic absenteeism for fatherless African American male students occurs during changes in the household composition such as divorce, incarceration, separation, cohabitation, and paternal death. Household changes increase absenteeism, grade retention, and drop out because of family instability and excessive days missed from school. Ingul et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between family characteristics in high school adolescents ages 16 to 21 and chronic absenteeism severity. Chronic absenteeism was measured with respect to total days and hours absent, and participants were divided into three groups: no absences (< 1.5 days), normal absences (≥ 1.5 and < 13.5 days), and high absences (≥ 13.5 days or 15%). Externalizing problems, the mother's level of education, the family's income level, the mother's work schedule, living in a household without a biological father, bullying/cyberbullying, and school safety were identified as risk factors for chronic absenteeism. Overall, 55% percent of African American male students from absent father household compositions fell into the high absence groups (Ingul et al., 2012).

The United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) determined that a student is considered absent from school if 50% of the school day is missed regardless if the absence is excused or unexcused. Days missed from school due to out-of-school suspension are also calculated into the chronic absenteeism rate. Hence, it is easy to understand how African American male students from absent father household compositions accumulated the highest

chronic absenteeism rates in South Carolina due to the overuse of punitive discipline and school exclusion. Smerillo et al. (2018) reported that chronic absenteeism presents a greater threat of attaining a high school diploma for males than females. The associations between chronically absent students and eighth-grade math achievement were nearly equal for males ($d = -.16$) and females ($d = -.18$). For males, all other associations, except reading, were significant at the $p < .05$ level. For females, the associations were significant for four-year graduation and graduation by diploma. The lack of supervision and discipline in father-absent household compositions puts African American male students at risk for excessive school absences (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2019). In sum, chronic absences precipitate academic underachievement, low rates of high school completion, and dropout.

Chronic absenteeism among low-income students of color with absent fathers—especially African American students—has been reported as one of the leading causes of dropout and grade retention (Davis et al., 2019). Researchers have claimed that chronic absenteeism magnifies underlying problems, misbehavior, family dysfunction, bullying, poverty, and frequent involvement with the juvenile justice system (Ahmed & Miller, 2015; Amato et al., 2015). Moreover, African American male adolescents with poor school attendance are usually unsupervised and have more opportunities to engage in delinquent behaviors and antisocial behaviors.

Chronic absenteeism acts as a catalyst for low academic motivation, school disengagement, and problematic behaviors (Henderson et al., 2014). Studies have shown that the use of zero-tolerance policies contributes to chronic absenteeism and low graduation rates among African American male students from absent father household compositions (Maynard et al., 2017; Monahan et al., 2014). Further, these students are three times more likely to be suspended

for absences compared to other male students (Haight et al., 2016). To this end, it can be argued that disproportionality in punitive discipline practices is a persistent social injustice issue affecting African American male students.

Suspension Rates and Expulsion Rates

African American males from absent father households are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior because of weakened family structures (Curtis et al., 2017; Markowitz & Ryan, 2016). Ganao et al. (2013) found that absent father households are a risk factor for antisocial behavior, aggression, misbehavior, disobedience, cheating, stealing, and dishonesty. African American male students with absent fathers are four times more likely to be suspended or expelled compared to African American males with present fathers (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2014). Researchers have found that African American males with absent fathers have high disciplinary rates, resulting in missed days from school and suspensions, thus lowering their graduation rates (Jackson et al., 2014; Sheryl et al., 2014). Givens et al. (2016) and Skiba et al. (2014) argued that African American male students with absent fathers receive harsh punitive discipline for minor infractions. Regarding school disciplinarian practices, Jackson et al. (2014) reported that zero-tolerance policies led to an increase in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for African American males. The negative implications of zero-tolerance policies (i.e., exclusionary discipline) are dropout, increased antisocial behavior, and failure to graduate. Ultimately, the policies initiate a pathway to the school-to-prison pipeline for African American males with absent fathers (González, 2015; Monahan et al., 2014).

Exclusionary discipline describes any form of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes students from their usual school setting (Anyon et al., 2016). Out-of-school suspension and expulsion are two of the most common exclusionary discipline practices used in schools

throughout the United States. Since suspension results in removal from the classroom environment, it can lead to lower grades in core subjects, more delinquent behaviors, and a lack of supervision during the exclusion (Amato et al., 2015; Cobb-Clark & Tekin, 2014; Markowitz & Ryan, 2016). Furthermore, school exclusion through out-of-school suspension and expulsion has been linked to grade retention, more extreme misbehavior, chronic absenteeism, low graduation rates, and dropout for African American males with absent fathers (Jackson et al., 2014; Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2015).

In a meta-analysis of 34 studies on out-of-school suspension and academic outcomes, Noltemeyer et al. (2015) found an inverse association between out-of-school suspension rates and academic outcomes, as well as a positive association between out-of-school suspension and dropout. Out-of-school suspension and dropout rates were higher among students with absent fathers when compared to students with present fathers. Similarly, Stempel et al. (2017) found that males from absent father households are more likely to be excluded from school, more likely to quit school at age 16, and less likely to graduate high school. School exclusion through out-of-school suspension and expulsion remains a substantial component of discipline in United States schools. Research studies have indicated that almost two-thirds of all African American male students aged 12 to 21 may experience an out-of-school suspension or expulsion at some point in their school career (Skiba et al., 2014; Suh et al., 2014).

Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions are even more disproportionate when African American male students live in households without fathers (Ganao et al., 2013; Suh et al., 2014). Jacobsen (2019) indicated that children whose fathers were absent due to incarceration were more likely to experience an expulsion or a suspension. Jacobsen also found that children with incarcerated fathers were more likely to be suspended or expelled at a higher rate compared to

children who did not have incarcerated fathers. Fifty-four percent of African American males had incarcerated fathers, and 29% of African American males had been suspended or expelled. Jacobsen also noted a sizeable reduction in academic performance for African American males. The study's results suggested that educators, school counselors, and students should work together on coping skills and behavioral and academic interventions to address the social-emotional impact of absent fathers (Jacobsen, 2019).

The issue of the overrepresentation of African American male students in out-of-school suspensions was recently broached by the Department of Education in a comprehensive study analyzing data across the nation. The analysis showed that African American males made up 18% of the participants in the study but accounted for 35% of the students who were suspended at least one time. The Department of Education's analysis also showed that African American males represented 48% of those students who were suspended at least twice and 39% of all expulsions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The overuse of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions decreases instructional time, GPAs, school attendance, and academic performance of African American males. Research has shown that when African American male students are suspended from school, they are not allowed to make up assignments, thus, lower grades and rates of graduation (Givens et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2014).

For a myriad of complex reasons, African American males in school systems across the United States disproportionately experience adverse educational outcomes (McCray et al., 2015). The adverse school experiences of African American male students with absent fathers includes unfair disciplinary practices, disproportionate referrals for special education services, underrepresentation in AP classes, expulsions, suspensions, grade retention, and dropout (Banks, 2017; McCray et al., 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Combined with the

aforementioned adverse educational experiences are the lack of financial resources, low school engagement and motivation, family dysfunction, academic underachievement, fatherlessness, and chronic absenteeism (Ahmad & Miller, 2015; Isik et al., 2018). Ultimately, the lack of paternal presence in the lives of African American male students exacerbates their adverse educational experience. In support, research has shown that paternal involvement is critical for African American males' academic achievement. Notably, the presence of a father in the household promotes daily school attendance and high school completion (Baker, 2014; Ransaw, 2014).

Factors that Promote Graduation and Attendance for African American Males

Researchers have consistently reported the negative aspects of the African American male, addressing the academic and social challenges they must encounter in the educational system across the United States and the issues leading up to their academic underachievement in school (Banks, 2017; McCray, 2015; Monahan et al., 2014; Noltemeyer et al., 2015). The gap in the literature has been identified as a lack of available research data, specifically, data on the academic success of African American males raised in absent father households (Land et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2016). This section will address that gap in the knowledge by focusing on positive factors that promote high school graduation and school attendance of African American males. Previous studies have focused on the negative attributes and factors of African American males, such as the overrepresentation in special education programs, dropout rates, misbehavior, grade retention, academic underachievement, and disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions instead of the positive factors and attributes: perseverance, resilience, single-gender schools, extended family support, self-determination, mentors, positive school relationships, and paternal involvement. However, few studies have revealed that not all African

American males with absent fathers will perform below academic standards and that fatherless African American males have the capacity to meet or exceed academic standards (Curtis et al., 2017; Wilson, 2016).

Paternal Involvement

Genesis 18:19 states, “For I have chosen him so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right.” Over the past several decades, researchers have documented the role that paternal involvement plays in the social-emotional development and educational attainment of adolescents (Baker, 2018; Yogman & Garfield, 2016). In early childhood through late adolescents, paternal involvement leads to better social-emotional and cognitive skills (Jeynes, 2016; Lee & Rispoli, 2019). The academic outcomes of African American males have been found to be significantly influenced by paternal involvement in high school (Jeynes, 2016). African American males with secure relationships with their fathers, as children, had higher school engagement and academic achievement compared to children with unstable relationships with their fathers (Di Folco et al., 2017).

In high school, paternal involvement is associated with academic achievement, positive social-emotional regulation, low chronic absenteeism, and better behavioral functioning (Huang et al., 2018; Jethwani et al., 2014). On a national level, African American males whose fathers are present and involved in their education typically receive better grades, exhibit more positive attitudes about school, and engage in appropriate social skills, thus reducing disciplinary rates (Yogman & Garfield, 2016). Jeynes (2015) conducted a meta-analysis of 66 research studies that examined the relationship between paternal involvement and academic outcomes. The results indicated that fathers have an overall positive influence on academic outcomes.

Paternal involvement in the lives of African American males has been associated with

increments in school readiness and psychosocial well-being (Hebert et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2014; Potter, 2014). Paternal involvement is also associated with African American male students' positive behavioral and social-emotional skills because males can learn the skills from a male's perspective, reducing days missed from school due to out-of-school suspension (Stanik et al., 2014). Fathers play a significant role in African American families as the disciplinarian and a moral supporter (Adkison-Bradley et al., 2014). Paternal involvement is important in the lives of African American males, and the contributions of their fathers greatly influence their sons' high school graduation and chronic absenteeism (Ransaw, 2014; Stanik et al., 2014).

Mentors

Researchers have identified mentoring programs as a potential solution in increasing graduation rates and school attendance for African American male students with absent fathers (Jacob & Lovett, 2017; Mac Iver et al., 2017). Mentors are used to address educational, social, and behavioral concerns. The key component in all mentorship programs is meaningful and positive relationships between the mentors and the mentees. Mentorships are most effective when the mentors have previous experience with adolescents, implemented consistently for an extended time, have knowledge of the student's familial background, focus specifically on the mentee's individual needs and goals, and acts as a role model (Green, 2015). Gordon et al. (2014) also confirmed that mentoring programs are correlated with high rates of school attendance by examining the relationship between school-based mentoring programs and chronic absenteeism.

Mentorship programs promote relationships in which the mentor provides guidance, encouragement, and support to improve the school performance, behavior, and attendance of mentees while acting as an advocate for the mentee's overall academic functioning (Balfanz &

Byrnes, 2013; Rogers, 2014). Mentors have been used to successfully reduce absenteeism in African American male students by providing daily contact and supervision (Gordon et al., 2014). Successful mentoring programs provide effective training in relationship building and problem-solving, allowing mentors to provide encouragement, support, and supervision to track student progress. Essentially, mentors are role models who guide students on a more productive path, in many cases, to reduce dropout, misbehavior, chronic absenteeism, and grade retention and to increase the overall academic performance (Jacob & Lovett, 2017). Therefore, mentors encourage and build up another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Single-gender Schools

Single-gender schools contribute positively to the school attendance and the graduation rates of fatherless African American male students. These schools are mostly known as an alternative education setting for non-White male students who have below average or average success in traditional schools. Single-gender schools have benefited African American males with significant improvements in academic achievement, self-esteem, school attendance, and social-emotional skills (Scott et al., 2014). Butler College Prep is a public charter high school on the south side of Chicago. The student population is 95% low-income, African American, and 65% of the students are from father-absent household compositions (Rhames, 2019). In 2018, 100% of the students graduated high school. African American male students at Butler College Prep scored higher on the ACT (19.5) when compared to African American male students on a national level (17). Arguably, single-gender schools provide racial identity, self-awareness, and self-respect (Scott et al., 2014).

Furthermore, research has supported that physical interactions between males increased school engagement in core subject as a direct result of being in a single-gendered classroom

environment, while increasing graduation rates for African American males, especially African American males with absent fathers. For example, Rogers et al. (2015) conducted a study that investigated the relationship between gender identity and academic performance at a Black male charter school located in the Midwest. Fifty-eight percent of the students lived in father-absent household compositions. Roger et al. found a positive correlation between gender identity and academic performance. In the study, 94% of African American males were shown to graduate high school on time. The higher gender identity scores were positively linked to higher academic performance and GPAs. Both variables were significantly correlated, and each played a role in the academic performance and the graduation rates of African American male students over time (Roger et al., 2015).

Another successful program for father-absent males is Youth Engaged in Service (YES) Prep, a public charter school located in Houston, Texas. Ninety-five percent of the students are Hispanic or African American, 68% of the students are from father-absent households, and 80% are poor. The average dropout rates for the district were 16% and the state 9%, whereas YES Prep was just 1%. The students at YES Prep graduated at 90%, the district 70%, and the state 81% (YES Prep, 2018). Across the United States, African American males from father-absent households in single-gender schools have higher graduation rates compared to father-absent African American males in traditional schools (Musu-Gillette, 2017). Additionally, students at YES Prep had lower rates of chronic absenteeism (5%) and the district (12%; YES Prep, 2018). It can be reasoned that chronic absenteeism rates for African American males who attend single-gender or charter schools are low since positive relationships are easily established because the teachers are more aware and understand the cultural implications and the educational needs of the students.

Positive School Relationships

One important strategy to increase graduation rates and chronic absenteeism rates is the connection between African American male students and their teachers (Booth et al., 2014; Wilkins, 2014). Positive relationships between teachers and African American male students may provide long-term benefits to the students' academic achievement and behavior (Brooms, 2016; Gregory et al., 2016). Isik et al. (2018) suggested that a sense of belonging is important for all students, but it may be particularly important for African American male students with absent fathers. African American male students from absent father households already deal with a sense of rejection and abandonment because of losing their fathers. Thus, these students need to connect and identify with the school environment in order to feel welcomed and respected. If not, African American males begin to slowly disengage, which leads to lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates (Bryan et al., 2012). However, a positive connection with at least one teacher has been shown to be associated with lower disciplinary rates, better school attendance, and graduating on time (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013). La Salle et al. (2015) asserted that the academic performance of students is the direct result of the dynamic interactions between students, their teachers, and their social environment.

The academic success of African American males with absent fathers is likely influenced by their perceptions of themselves within the school social environment. In other words, when African American male students do not perceive themselves to be a contributing part of their school environment, they are at greater risk of dropping out of school (O'Malley et al., 2014; Voisin et al., 2018). Without a positive relationship with their teachers, adolescents may experience academic problems and chronic absenteeism (Voisin et al., 2018). O'Malley et al. (2014) conducted a study that examined the relationship between GPAs, family composition, and

school climate. The study revealed that students with absent fathers had a significant relationship between school climate and GPAs.

Resilience and Family Support

Positive school relationships provide pathways to stimulate high self-esteem and resilience in African American families with absent fathers. Several researchers have found that the resilience of single African American mothers who are raising their sons despite the absence of fathers is an important factor in their sons' academic achievement (Land et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2016). Single African American mothers demonstrate their resilience to their sons with the assistance and support of extended family members. Wilson et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study that investigated single African American mothers who raised successful African American males in father-absent households. The findings revealed themes that explained the experiences of raising successful African American male students: (1) education is important; (2) intimate partners were secondary to their sons; (3) financial problems were handled each time they occurred; (4) healthy mother-son relationships were a priority; (5) religion was used as a coping mechanism for the mothers; (6) mothers were respectful of the fathers even in their absence, and (7) extended family support is important. In essence, family support is the backbone of successfully father-absent households.

Family influence and support are important for the educational attainment of African American males. The mother's level of education has been identified as a key determinant of academic success in African American males with absent fathers (Mandemakers & Kalmijn, 2014). The mother's education level directly influences the son's attitude about attendance, work ethics, behavior at school, grades, and study habits. In addition, the mother's level of education has been identified as a strong predictor of academic success in fatherless African American

males, as their education level is a determinate of income, academic values, academic motivation, and the type of schools and neighborhoods adolescents will attend and reside in (Mandemakers & Kalmijn, 2014). Other family members and African American male role models may provide positive images of what African American males aspire to become, promoting academic excellence and high school completion.

Parental monitoring and adult supervision influence the educational outcomes and lower the chronic absenteeism of African American males (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). The parent and extended family members are required to take an active role in monitoring the adolescent's school activities with their peers as well as homework completion (Im et al., 2016). Chilenski et al. (2015) examined the relationship between parental monitoring, academic achievement, and school engagement among African American students. The researchers confirmed that parental monitoring had the most straightforward relationship to school engagement, including academic motivation, academic achievement, and attendance. Parental monitoring through models like Check and Connect is used in conjunction with the school system to minimize absenteeism (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014). The Check and Connect models allow attendance clerks to monitor and notify the family when a student is absent from school.

Fatherless African American males are resilient in that they can withstand all the inequalities of the educational system and excel academically despite negative stereotypes, harsh disciplinary practices, and low expectations of their academic performance. Land et al. (2014) argued that the household composition and extended family support of African American male students with absent fathers helped their resiliency, which instilled a sense of self-determination and self-discipline. Land et al. also revealed that young African American males might overcome obstacles by using personal resilience, problem-solving, exhibiting academic motivation, and

making decisions about their educational attainment. The researchers indicated that African American male students with high levels of academic motivation and school engagement could achieve academically regardless of absent fathers (Land et al., 2014). School engagement is a predictor of regular school attendance. Research has shown that the presence of extended family members may provide financial resources and emotional support to adolescents and mothers to increase graduation rates and reduce absenteeism rates for African American males with absent fathers (Langa, 2014).

Summary

Chapter Two provided background research on the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. In summary, the literature confirms that absent father households adversely impact the academic performance of African American male students. Chronic absenteeism for African American male students from absent father households has been linked to dropout and low graduation rates. These students are more likely to have deficient social-emotional skills and misbehavior that affect their academic trajectories, absenteeism, and graduation. Additionally, they are more likely to be on the lowest academic track, affecting their quality of education and graduation.

BFST assumes that absent fathers have an adverse impact on high school graduation and chronic absenteeism of African American males, which progressively leads to high disciplinary rates, high rates of grade retention, academic underachievement, and eventually dropping out of high school altogether. Furthermore, there is a consensus in the research literature regarding the adverse educational consequences of growing up without a father in the household. African American males with absent fathers are more likely to engage in misbehaviors that decrease their graduation and increase chronic absenteeism. On a national level, these males are more likely to

have lower graduation rates compared to males with present fathers. Also, African American male high school students from urban and low-income communities were associated with chronic absenteeism and low graduation rates.

Numerous statistics have explained the severity of the academic underachievement of African American male students. Perhaps the most revealing statistic was the graduation rates for African American males in South Carolina in 2018 (78.6%) compared to the overall graduation rate of 83.6% for males. Equally notable is the fact that fewer than 8% of African American male students performed at advanced levels or were enrolled in AP. Fewer than 10% of African American males were at or above grade level. Reading and math state test scores for African American males were 30 points below the average for the school district. In conjunction with the academic statistics, the data on absenteeism, dropout, and disciplinary rates promote a similar picture of the educational experience of African American male students. God is a Father to the fatherless, and with support and encouragement from extended family members and mentors, God can enable African American males with absent fathers to have the academic capacities to become successful despite their obstacles (Psalm 68:5). Research in social science and education is starting to give voice to the stereotype, which does not include the fact that African American male students with absent fathers can achieve at the same levels academically as students with present fathers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter Three outlines the methodology for the examination of chronic absenteeism, graduation, and household compositions of African American male students. Archival data reports collected from the SCDE and the U.S. Census Bureau will not contain publicly identifiable information. The raw data files and the codebook will be stored on a password-locked computer that will be accessed only by the researcher. CTA is a data mining, exploratory multivariate technique used to analyze three or more variables; it was used in this study during data analysis. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. Chapter Three provides a detailed description of the research design, research questions, hypotheses, setting and participants, procedures, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study used a quantitative correlational research design to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The null hypothesis states that there is no statistically significant relationship between household compositions, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students. A logical positivism approach was most appropriate for this study because it rests upon the verification of observable and numerical data (e.g., quantitative research methods) instead of personal lived experiences and non-numerical data: qualitative research methods (Yilmaz, 2014). Logical positivism is a philosophical approach committed to the principle of verification through numerical and observational data (Marsonet, 2019). The independent variables in this study are household composition, gender, race, and income. The dependent

variables are chronic absenteeism and graduation. The variables are the premise of the statistical analysis, which were used to explore Bowen's concept of emotional cutoff by determining the extent of the relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation.

Quantitative research methods are used to analyze statistical, numerical, or mathematical data collected through questionnaires and surveys or by manipulating pre-existing archival data using inferential statistics (Bernard, 2017). Quantitative research methods were most appropriate for the research study, as qualitative methods would not have allowed the researcher to use data to identify the relationships among or differences between graduation, chronic absenteeism, and household composition. Furthermore, single-mother household compositions may lead African American male students to deficiencies in behavioral development, social-emotional skills, and academic outcomes, which progressively contribute to chronic absenteeism, misbehavior, grade retention, and dropout. To investigate the relationship between household composition, graduation, and chronic absenteeism for African American male students, a correlational research method was used.

Correlational research was most appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, graduation, and chronic absenteeism. Correlational research measures two or more variables without manipulation and then assesses the relationship between or the mean difference among variables. The variables then become the premise of statistical analysis, which determines if a difference or relationship among variables exists (Bernard, 2017; Yilmaz, 2014). In addition, correlational research can measure what degree of a relationship exists between two or more variables (Curtis et al., 2016). Researchers often use more complex correlational research to examine relationships or differences between several variables in the same study.

Correlational research does not describe the nature of the relationship as descriptive research and cannot be used to determine causation as in experimental research. In this study, correlational research was used as part of the methodological assumption to answer the research problem.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students?

RQ2: What factors best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no statistically significant relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students.

H₀2: There are no factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions.

Participants and Setting

The participants for this study were drawn using an archival sample of African American males who were enrolled in high school in South Carolina from May 2013 to May 2018. South Carolina is a mixture of lower to middle and middle to upper-income suburban, rural, and urban communities located in the southeastern region of the United States. Archival sampling is a nonrandom strategy used to ensure that a specific population with specific characteristics will be represented in the targeted sample of a study. The rationale for using archival sampling methods is that a researcher needed specific individuals with uniquely defined characteristics (e.g., age, race, gender, graduation year, and household composition). Their presence in the study was ensured to appropriately answer the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015).

From May 2013 to May 2018, 153,730 African American and Caucasian public high school students were enrolled in South Carolina. Forty-nine percent (75,563) of the student population were African American students, 51% (79,386) were male, and 48.4% (74,343) were female. The inclusion criteria of the study were preselected for specific characteristics based on the archival raw data from the SCDE and the U.S. Census Bureau. The targeted sample for this study was African American male students aged 14 to 21. The participants were enrolled in high school in South Carolina between 2013 and 2015. Students were excluded from the study if they are female of another race other than African American and Caucasian. Males younger than 14 or older than 21 years of all ethnic/racial subgroups were also excluded. Students were excluded from the study if they graduated high school before 2013 or after 2018 and if they graduated from a high school outside of South Carolina.

Procedures

Archival data were collected from the SCDE for the time frame of May 2013 to May 2018 for three graduating cohorts. In addition, archival data were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau on the composition of single-mother and two-parent households and the median household income for the state of South Carolina. The period allowed trends to become apparent; additionally, this period represents recent years of archival data.

Secondary data analysis is the analysis of archival data collected by a researcher for another primary purpose. Archival data attempts to answer a new research question. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted two approaches for analyzing archival data: the research question-driven approach and the data-driven approach. For this study, the research question-driven approach was used. Secondary analysis is an empirical data collection method that applies the same basic research principles as studies using primary data, and it has steps to be followed as

any other research method (Johnston, 2017).

The researcher collected archival data on graduation and chronic absenteeism for African American/Black and Caucasian/White students from the SCDE by the nine-digit zip code. In addition, archival data were collected by the nine-digit zip code from the U.S. Census Bureau on the composition of single-mother households and two-parent households and the median household income for African Americans and Caucasians for the state of South Carolina. Although the targeted population for this study was African American males, archival data were collected for Black females and White students to differentiate factors, including race, graduation, income, gender, household composition, and chronic absenteeism. The researcher used archival data to test the relationship between household composition, graduation, and chronic absenteeism. It was also used to identify the factors that best differentiate between students from single-mother households and students from two-parent households.

The archival data reports for this study were not available to the public on SCDE's website. Therefore, the researcher called the SCDE to determine how to obtain archival data reports on graduation and chronic absenteeism by nine-digit zip codes for Black and White students ages 14 to 21 who were enrolled in high school in South Carolina from 2013 to 2018 (three graduating cohorts). The researcher later submitted a request through the SCDE website for the archival data. An email from the SCDE was sent to notify the researcher that the request was approved. This allowed the researcher to access the archival data through the SCDE website using a username and password. The researcher downloaded and saved the data. A codebook was used to input the data into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in preparation to complete the data analysis process.

The researcher also contacted the U.S. Census Bureau to inquire about obtaining and

requesting archival data reports on the composition of two-parent households for African Americans and Caucasians and the composition of single-parent homes for Caucasians and African Americans for South Carolina, in which a mother is the head of household. The median household income will be collected by the nine-digit zip codes from 2013 to 2018. The researcher also submitted a request through the U.S. Census Bureau's website for the archival data reports. Once the request was completed, a U.S. Census Bureau representative sent an email to the researcher. The researcher downloaded and saved the data then input the data into SPSS to complete the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis process, the researcher used the archival data collected from the SCDE and the U.S. Census Bureau to answer the research questions. The researcher collected archival data on graduation and chronic absenteeism for Black and White students from the SCDE by the nine-digit zip code for three graduating cohorts from 2013 to 2018. The archival data reports from the SCDE were used to analyze chronic absenteeism and graduation in the targeted sample. The archival data reports were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau on household composition for single-mother and two-parent households and the median household income by the nine-digit zip code for African Americans and Caucasians. The archival data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the SCDE were used to impute the student's household composition by matching the nine-digit zip code for each student provided by SCDE and the nine-digit zip code of the percentage of household composition based on the student's race. CTA was also used during data analysis.

Given that the data were collected over a six-year timeframe and no government or state educational policy occurred, it is unlikely that splitting the data into two datasets would have

yielded different results. This study was limited because the raw data did not provide the exact household composition for each student. This study was not intended to argue for conclusively or broadly generalizing the results. Other variables outside of this study may have impacted the graduation and chronic absenteeism of African American males with absent fathers. However, these limitations minimally impacted the study, as the results were intended to shed light and discover a solution to decrease the chronic absenteeism rates and increase the graduation rates for African American male students with absent fathers in South Carolina. In addition, the findings may provide insight and direction for future research studies interested in seeking other factors, associations, or differentiation among African American males with single mothers and African American males with two parents.

Data Definitions

Chronic absenteeism, graduation, household composition, race, gender, income, and zip code are the data fields that were included in the final imputed dataset for the analysis. Column 1 was race, defined as being Black or White. Column 2 was gender, defined as being female or male. Column 3 was graduation, defined as being graduate or non-graduate. Column 4 was chronic absenteeism, defined as chronically absent or not chronically absent. Column 5 was income, defined as earning below \$62,028 or above \$62,028. Column 6 was zip code, defined as a series of numbers used to identify the student's household composition location. Zip codes were used along with household composition data from the U.S. Census Bureau to impute the student's household composition. Column 7 was household composition, defined as either single-mother and two-parent.

Null Hypothesis One

Null Hypothesis One states that there is no statistically significant relationship between

household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students. CTA is a nonparametric, data mining, exploratory multivariate technique that predicts associations between three or more outcome categorical variables. It is a recursive technique that assesses the breakpoints in the predictive power of all variables. The recursive technique allows variables to be reconsidered for each subcategory. In this CTA model, the root node is household composition, and all intermediary nodes are defined by the variables: gender, income, and race that maximally differentiates the cases on a dichotomous outcome.

For this study, the variables maximally differentiated students who graduated from students who did not graduate, those who had chronic absenteeism from those who did not, if the student was male or female, and if the student was African American/Black or Caucasian/White. The root node, household composition, was the top node in the tree and differentiated the largest set of subcategories in the dataset. Similarly, all subsequent nodes were defined by the variable that maximally differentiated each subcategory on the dichotomous outcome variable.

Alternative Hypothesis One attempts to predict the relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students. Null Hypothesis One was accepted or rejected at a 0.05 level of significance.

Assumption screening for Null Hypothesis One was performed prior to the analysis of Null Hypothesis One. In order to use CTA, two data requirements and assumptions had to be met. First, the appropriate measurement level (i.e., nominal) must be assigned to all analysis variables. Secondly, for each categorical dependent variable, a value label must be defined for all categories included in the analysis. The CTA creates a tree-based classification model. The order in which variables appear in the tree matters. In this research study, the root node was household composition. The CTA model classified cases into subcategories or predicted values of the

dichotomous outcome variables based on the value of the predictor variable. The two subcategories of students were mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Laerd Statistics, 2017). During data analysis, the data frequency for each node was displayed in a data frequency table that showed the number of cases for each category of the independent variable and the dependent variables (Refer to Table 1). A CTA modal was used to analyze the relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American males.

Null Hypothesis Two

Null Hypothesis Two states that there are no factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. For this study, the variables maximally differentiated students who graduated from students who did not graduate, students who had chronic absenteeism from those who did not, if the student was male or female, if the median household income was above \$62,028 or income below \$62,028, and if the student was African American/Black or Caucasian/White. The root node, household composition, was the top node in the tree and differentiated the largest set of subcategories in the dataset. Similarly, all subsequent nodes were defined by the variable that maximally differentiated each subcategory on the dichotomous outcome variable. Null Hypothesis Two attempts to predict and identify the combination of factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions.

Assumption screening for Null Hypothesis Two was performed prior to the analysis of Null Hypothesis Two. The study met the criteria to use CTA; the two subcategories of students: single-mother and two-parent, were mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Laerd Statistics, 2017). CTA allowed factors to predict associations among the given variables and differentiate students

with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions based on graduation, chronic absenteeism, gender, race, and income.

Correlation analysis is a statistical method used to evaluate the strength of the relationship between two or more quantitative variables. In correlation analysis, a researcher calculates the correlation coefficient from two or more data sets and then compares the coefficient to an entry in a table of correlation coefficient criterion numbers. If the coefficient is greater than or equal to the selected criterion number, then there is a statistically significant correlation between the data sets (Bernard, 2017). Correlation analysis measures the strength of the association between variables ranging from -1 to $+1$. The association of 0 indicates no association at all, -1 indicates a negative association and $+1$ indicates a positive association.

Summary

Chapter Three outlined the methodology of this study. Specifically, this chapter presented the research questions, the null hypotheses, the sample, and the data collection procedures that guided the study. Chapter Three also described the quantitative correlational research design used to investigate the research problem. This study used archival data from the SCDE and the U.S. Census Bureau on chronic absenteeism and graduation for Black and White students, the composition of single-mother and two-parent households, and the median household income for African Americans and Caucasians in South Carolina. The targeted sample included African American students ages 14 to 21 who were enrolled in high school in South Carolina between 2013 and 2018. The participants were selected through archival sampling. The researcher used a codebook to input the data into SPSS for the data analysis process. CTA was also used during data analysis. Data output from SPSS provided information that allowed the researcher to accept or reject the null hypotheses at a significance level of $p = 0.05$.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Four reports the findings of the current study. This research study investigated the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. This chapter is divided into two sections. In section one, Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for each variable. Figures 1 and 2 display household composition data for South Carolina. In section two, assumption screening and data analysis were completed using CTA to analyze each hypothesis. Tables 2 and 3 present the results of assumption screening. Lastly, Figures 3 to 5 present the data analysis results for each hypothesis.

Descriptive Statistics

A total of 153,730 students participated in the study. The percent and the frequency for each of the dependent variables ($N = 15,3730$) and the subcategories of each dependent variable, graduation and chronic absenteeism, are displayed in Table 1. Table 1 also displays the percent and the frequency for each of the independent variables ($N = 15,3730$) and the subcategories of each independent variable: race, gender, income, and household composition.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Race, Gender, Household Composition, Graduation, Income, and Chronic Absenteeism

	Race	Gender	Household Composition	Graduation	Income	Chronic Absenteeism
N	153730	153730	153730	153730	153730	153730
Race	N					%
Black	75563					49.2
White	78167					50.8
Gender						
Male		79386				51.6
Female		74344				48.4

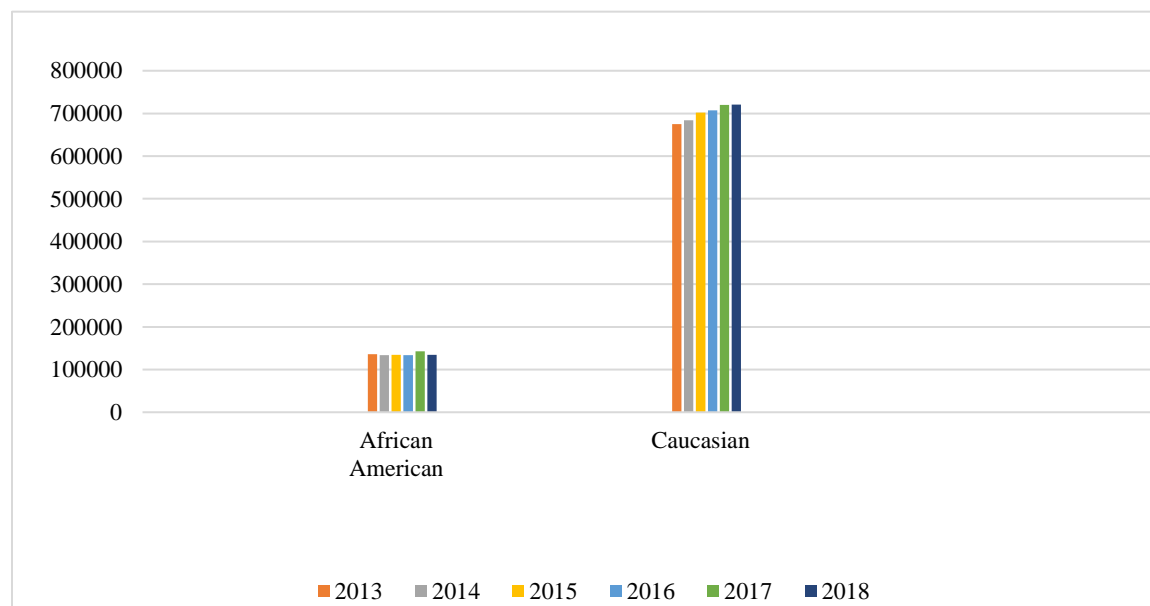
Table 1 continued

Descriptive Statistics for Race, Gender, Household Composition, Graduation, Income, and Chronic Absenteeism

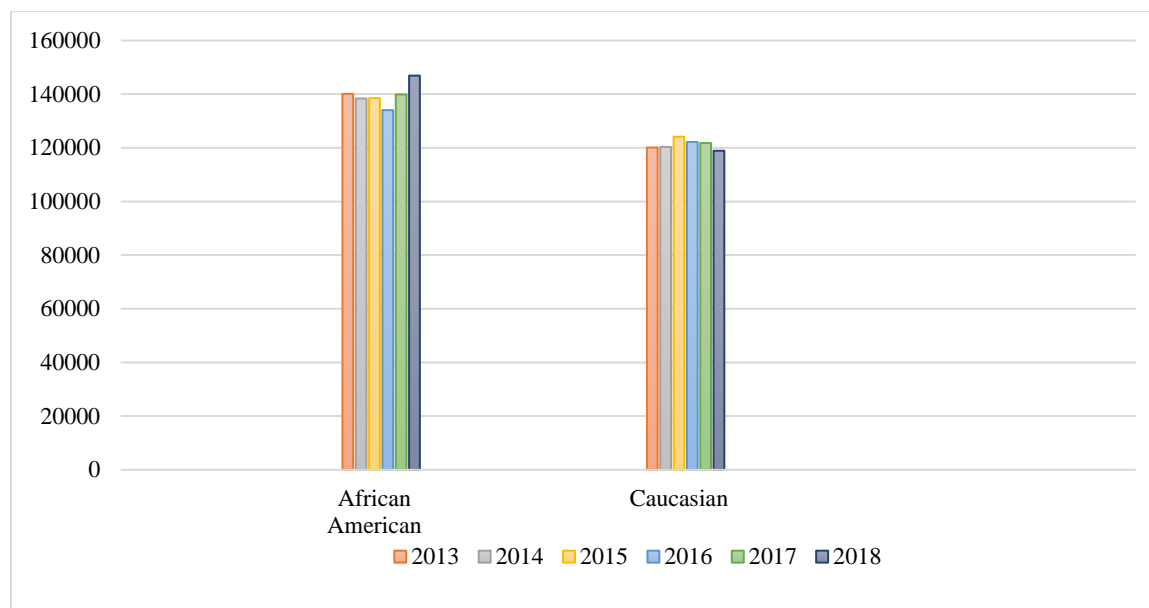
	Race	Gender	Household Composition	Graduation	Income	Chronic Absenteeism
Household Composition						
Two Parent			84545			55.0
Single Mother			69185			45.0
Graduation						
Nongraduate			27194			17.7
Graduate			126536			82.3
Income						
Above \$62,028			45620			29.7
Below \$62,028			120220			70.3
Chronic Absenteeism						
Not Chronically Absent			148490			96.6
Chronically Absent			5240			3.4

Figure 1

Two-Parent Householders in South Carolina from 2013-2018



Note. In South Carolina from 2013 to 2018, African American two-parent householders ranged from 133,568 to 142,431. Caucasian two-parent householders ranged from 684,325 to 721,038.

Figure 2*Single-Mother Householders in South Carolina from 2013-2018*

Note. In South Carolina from 2013 to 2018, African American single-mother householders ranged from 136,366 to 146,924. Caucasian single-mother householders ranged from 120,103 to 124,130.

Results

Null Hypothesis One

Null Hypothesis One states that there is no statistically significant relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students. A CTA was performed to ascertain and predict the impact and likelihood that household composition has on chronic absenteeism and graduation for African American male students. In the analysis of Null Hypothesis One, a classification tree was performed using the Chi-square Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID) growth method with a Bonferroni adjusted p-value. CHAID calculated the statistical significance between the sub-nodes and the parent node. CHAID measured the statistical significance by the sum of squares of standardized differences between observed and expected frequencies of the target variable.

The classification tree was built through a binary recursive partitioning process. This iterative process splits the data into partitions and then splits the data further on each of the branches. The root node in the CTA model (Figure 3: Relationship between Variables) indicated a statistically significant ($p = .033$, $\chi^2 = 4.569$) difference between graduation and household composition. Specifically, findings indicated that graduation accounted for a large portion of the variance in household composition, leading the root node to split into two sub-node groups, one consisting of students from single-mother household compositions and another consisting of students from two-parent household compositions.

From this point forward, the factors influencing graduation in the two groups of students differed according to household composition. After the number of students in each household composition group, race was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students in the two-parent household composition group. Black students graduated at a higher rate of 85.2%, $N = 34,997$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 414.066$). White students graduated at a rate of 79.9%, $N = 34,752$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 414.066$). Race (Black) was a determining factor for graduation among students in the two-parent household composition group. Specifically, the higher rates amongst Black students were found to be a determining factor for graduation in the sample. After the race of the students in the two-parent household composition group, chronic absenteeism was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for Black students in the group.

Black students who were not not chronically absent graduated at a rate of 85.9%, $N = 33,624$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 312.41$). Black chronically absent students graduated at a rate lower of 71.3%, $N = 1,373$ ($p < .033$, $\chi^2 = 312.41$). Black and not chronically absent were determining factors in graduation among students in this group, with a graduation rate of 85.9%. For Black not chronically absent, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for

students in the two-parent household composition group. Black females graduated at a rate of 83.3%, $N = 16,033$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 218.798$). Black males graduated at a rate of 88.5%, $N = 17,591$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 218.798$). Amongst not chronically absent students, Black males graduated at a higher rate of 88.5%. After the gender of the Black not chronically absent students in the group, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for Black chronically absent students.

Black chronically absent males graduated at a rate of 70.3%, $N = 1,135$ ($p < .033$, $\chi^2 = 4.537$). Black chronically absent females graduated at a higher rate of 76.3%, $N = 238$ ($p < .033$, $\chi^2 = 4.537$). Amongst chronically absent students, Black females graduated at a higher rate of 76.3%. Gender (female) was a determining factor for graduation among students in the two-parent household composition group. Not chronically absent, Black, and male were found to be variables that differentiated students in terms of graduation. Specifically, the higher rates amongst Black male students were found to be a determining factor in graduation in the sample. After the gender of chronically absent Black students in the two-parent household composition group, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for White students in the two-parent household composition group.

White males graduated at a rate of 82.5%, $N = 18,402$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 186.116$). White females graduated at a lower rate of 77.2%, $N = 16,350$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 186.116$). White and male were found to be variables that differentiated students in terms of graduation. After the gender of White students in the two-parent household composition group, chronic absenteeism was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students. White chronically absent females graduated at a rate of 84.2%, $N = 245$ ($p = .004$, $\chi^2 = 8.146$). White not chronically absent females graduated at a rate of 77.1%, $N = 16,105$ ($p = .004$, $\chi^2 = 8.146$). Gender (female) was a

determining factor for graduation among students in the two-parent household composition group. White, chronically absent, and female were determining factors for graduation among students in this group. Specifically, the higher rates of graduation amongst White, chronically absent, and females were found to be determining factors in graduation in the sample. For the two-parent household composition group, no other factors were determined for graduation in this sample.

For the single-mother household composition group, after the number of students in each household composition group, chronic absenteeism was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students in the single-mother household composition group. Chronically absent students graduated at a rate of 70.6%, $N = 1,878$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 249.10$). Not chronically absent students graduated at a rate of 82.5%, $N = 54,909$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 249.10$). Not chronically absent was a determining factor for graduation among students in this group. For not chronically absent students, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students in the single-mother household composition group.

Male students graduated at a rate of 83.2%, $N = 28,046$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 22.951$). Female students graduated at a lower rate of 81.8%, $N = 26,863$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 22.951$). Gender (male) was a determining factor for graduation among students in the group. After the gender of the not chronically absent students, race was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for females in the single-parent household composition group. White females graduated at a rate of 80.4%, $N = 13,512$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 45.569$). Black females graduated at a higher rate of 83.3%, $N = 13,351$ ($p < .001$, $\chi^2 = 45.569$). Specifically, the higher rates amongst not chronically absent, Black, and female students were found to be determining factors in graduation in the sample.

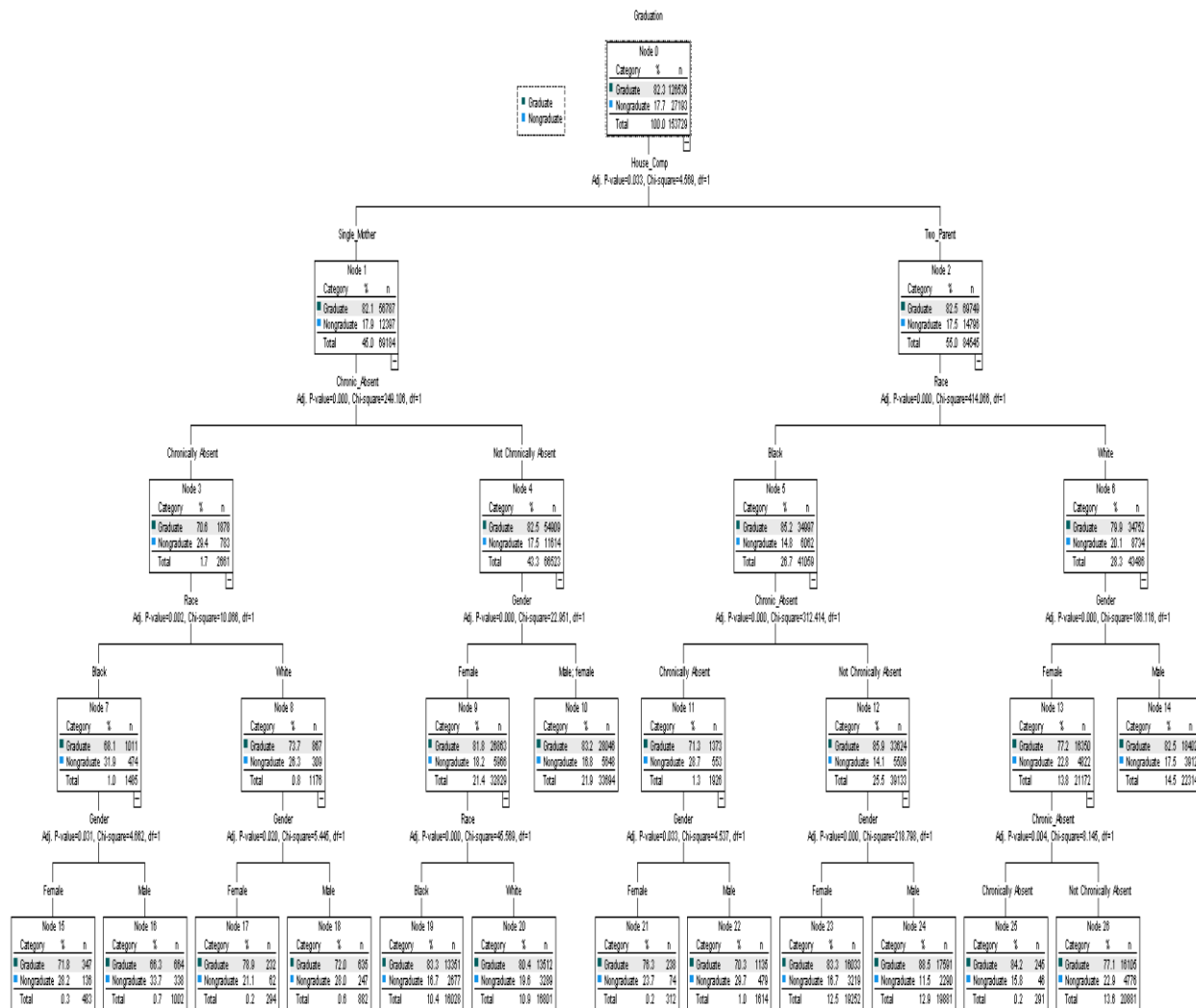
For chronically absent students, race was the next most influential factor affecting

graduation for students in the single-mother household composition group. Black students graduated at a rate of 68.1%, $N = 1,011$ ($p = .002$, $\chi^2 = 10.066$). White students graduated at a rate of 73.7%, $N = 867$ ($p = .002$, $\chi^2 = 10.066$). Race (White) was a determining factor for graduation among students in this group. Specifically, the higher rates amongst chronically absent and White students were found to be a determining factor in graduation in the sample. After the race of students in this group, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for male and female chronically absent students.

Black chronically absent females graduated at a rate of 71.8%, $N = 347$ ($p = 0.031$, $\chi^2 = 4.662$). Black chronically absent males graduated at a rate of 66.3%, $N = 664$ ($p = 0.031$, $\chi^2 = 4.662$). White chronically absent males graduated at a lower rate of 72%, $N = 635$ ($p = .020$, $\chi^2 = 5.445$). White chronically absent females graduated at a rate of 78.9%, $N = 232$ ($p = .020$, $\chi^2 = 5.445$). Gender (female) was a determining factor for graduation among students in this group. Specifically, the higher rates of graduation among White, female, and chronically absent students were found to be determining factors in graduation in the sample. For the single-mother household composition group, no other factors were determined for graduation in the sample.

Figure 3

Classification Tree Analysis Model Results: (Relationship between Variables)



Null Hypothesis One was rejected. There is a statistically significant relationship between household composition (single-mother and two-parent), chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students.

Assumption Screening for Null Hypothesis One

A CTA was conducted to predict the probability of a relationship between household

composition (two-parent and single-mother), chronic absenteeism, and graduation of African American male students. First, the appropriate measurement level (i.e., nominal) was assigned to all analysis variables. Second, for each categorical independent and dependent variable, a value label was defined for all categories included in the analysis. The data sets were screened for violations of assumption.

Summary of Assumption Screening

Assumption screening was performed prior to data analysis. Overall, race: Black (B) and White (W), gender: male (M) and female (F), household composition: two-parent (2) and single-mother (1), graduation: nongraduate (No) and graduate (Yes), chronic absenteeism: chronically absent (Y) and not chronically absent (N) and income: above \$62,028 (A) and below \$62,028 (B) met all the assumptions prior to analysis. Refer to Table 2 for assumption screening results for each variable.

Table 2

Results of Assumption Screening for Null Hypothesis One

Assumption	Results
Measurement Level Assigned (Nominal)	Assumption Not Violated
Defined Value Labels	Assumption Not Violated

Null Hypothesis Two

Null Hypothesis Two states that no factors best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. A CTA was performed to ascertain and predict which factors best differentiate students with single-mother

household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. In the analysis of Null Hypothesis Two, a classification tree was performed using the CHAID growth method with a Bonferroni adjusted p-value. CHAID calculated the statistical significance between the differences between sub-nodes and the parent node. The CHAID measures the statistical significance by the sum of squares of standardized differences between observed and expected frequencies of the target variable. In the CHAID technique, the parent node and the sub-nodes allow relationships between the split variables and the associated related factor to be easily visualized within the tree.

To analyze Null Hypothesis Two, two CTA models were performed. The first model, Figure 4, analyzed all independent variables with the targeted dependent variable (graduation). The root node CTA model indicated a difference between graduation and household composition. The second CTA model, Figure 5, analyzed all independent variables with the targeted dependent variable (chronic absenteeism). The root node in the CTA model indicated a difference between chronic absenteeism and household composition. Figure 4 and Figure 5 allowed all factors to be considered in terms of gender, graduation, race, chronic absenteeism, and income in order to differentiate factors for students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. Classification trees were built through a binary recursive partitioning process. This iterative process split the data into partitions and then split the data further on each of the branches.

Graduation

The root node in the CTA model (Figure 4: Classification Tree Analysis Model Results: Graduation) indicated a statistically significant ($p = .033$) difference between graduation and household composition. Specifically, findings indicated that graduation accounted for a large

portion of the variance in household composition, leading the root node to split into two sub-node groups, one consisting of students from single-mother household compositions and another consisting of students from two-parent household compositions. From this point forward, the factors influencing graduation in the two groups of students differed according to household composition. After the number of students in each household composition group, race was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students in the two-parent household composition group.

In this group, Black students graduated at a rate of 85.2%, $N = 34,997$ ($p < .001$). White students graduated at a rate of 79.9%, $N = 34,752$ ($p < .001$). Race was a determining factor for graduation among Black students in this group, with a graduation rate of 85.2%. Race (Black) was found to be a variable that differentiated students in terms of graduation. Specifically, the higher rates amongst Black students were found to be a determining factor in graduation in the sample. After the race of the students, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students in the two-parent household composition group.

Furthermore, White male students graduated at a rate of 82.5%, $N = 18,402$ ($p < .001$). White female students graduated at a lower rate of 77.2%, $N = 16,350$ ($p < .001$). Black males graduated at a rate of 87.1%, $N = 18,726$ ($p < .001$). Black females graduated at a lower rate of 83.2%, $N = 16,271$ ($p < .001$). Gender (male) was a determining factor for graduation among students in the group. Race (Black) and gender (male) were found to be variables that best differentiated students in terms of graduation. Specifically, the higher rates amongst Black and male were found to be determining factors in graduation in the sample. For the two-parent household composition group, no other factors were determined for graduation in the sample.

For the single-mother household composition group, after the number of students in each

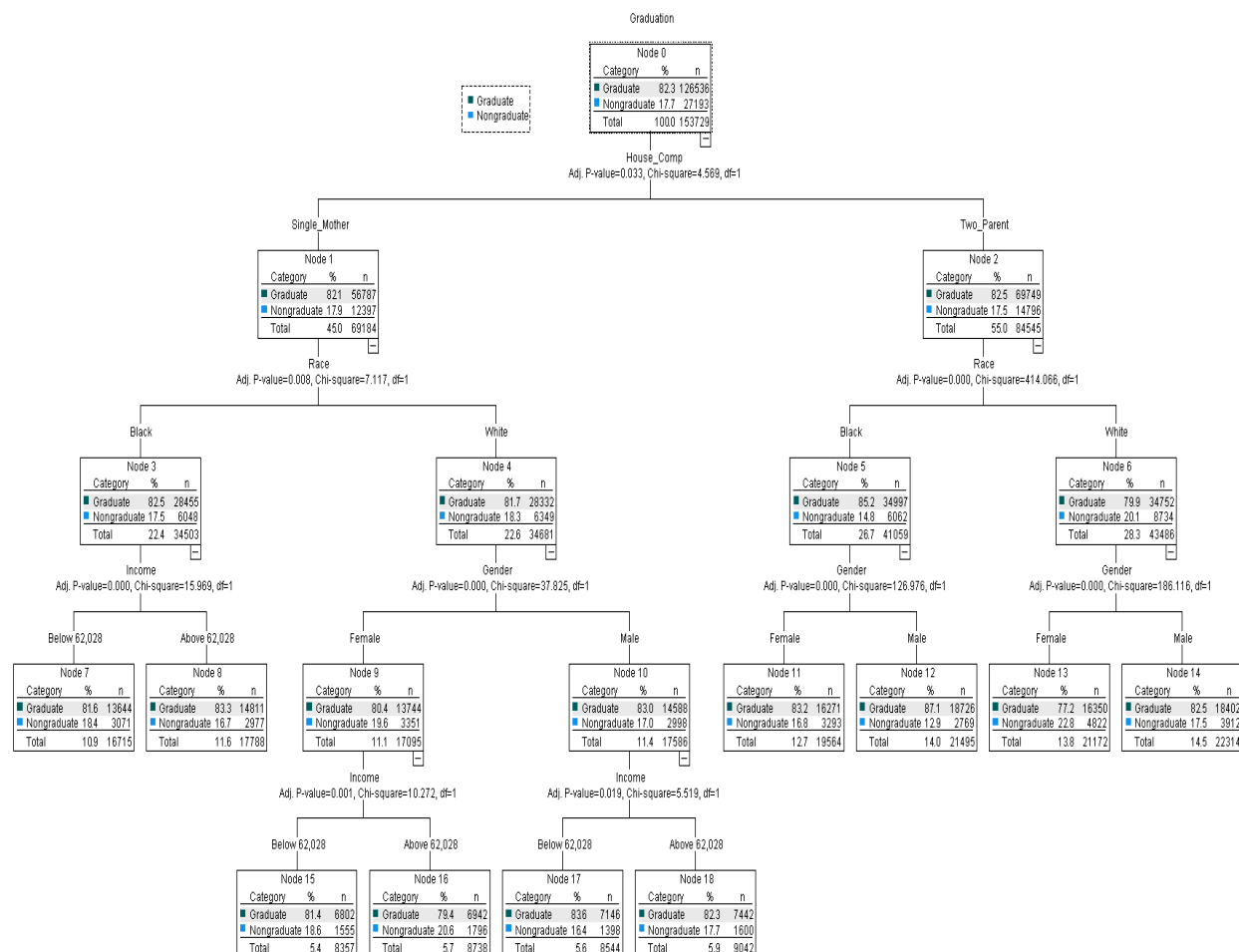
household composition group, race was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for students in the group. White students graduated at a rate of 81.7%, $N = 28,332$ ($p = .008$). Black students graduated at a rate of 82.5%, $N = 28,455$ ($p = .008$). Race (Black) was a determining factor for graduation among students in the single-mother household composition group. After the race of the students, income was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for Black students in the single-mother household composition group. Black students with a median household income above \$62,028 graduated at a higher rate of 83.3%, $N = 14,811$ ($p < .001$). Black students with a median household income below \$62,028 graduated at a rate of 81.6%, $N = 13,644$ ($p < .001$). After the income of the Black students, gender was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for White students in the single-mother household composition group.

Furthermore, White males graduated at a rate of 83%, $N = 14,588$ ($p < .001$). White females graduated at a lower rate of 80.4%, $N = 13,744$ ($p < .001$). After the gender of the White students, income below \$62,028 was the next most influential factor affecting graduation for White students in the single-mother household composition group. White male students with a median household income above \$62,028 graduated at a rate of 82.3%, $N = 7,444$ ($p = .019$). White female students with a median household income above \$62,028 graduated at a rate of 79.4%, $N = 6,942$ ($p = .001$). White males with a median household income below 62,028 graduated at a rate of 83.6%, $N = 7,146$ ($p = .019$). White females with a median household income below 62,028 graduated at a rate of 81.4%, $N = 6,802$ ($p = .001$). Race (White), gender (male), and income (below \$62,028) were found to be variables that differentiated students in terms of graduation. Specifically, the higher rates amongst White, male, and a median household income below \$62,028 were found to be determining factors in graduation in the sample. For the single-mother household composition group, no other factors were determined for graduation in

the sample.

Figure 4

Classification Tree Analysis Model Results (Graduation)



Chronic Absenteeism

The root node in the CTA model (Figure 5: Classification Tree Analysis Model Results Chronic Absenteeism) indicated a statistically significant ($p < .001$) difference between chronic absenteeism and household composition. Specifically, results indicated that chronic absenteeism accounted for a large portion of the variance in household composition, leading the root node to split into two sub-node groups, one consisting of students from single-mother households

compositions and another consisting of students from two-parent household compositions.

From this point forward, the factors influencing chronic absenteeism in the two groups differed according to household composition. After the number of students in each household composition group, income was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students in the two-parent household composition group. Students with a median household income above \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 1.0%, $N = 606$ ($p < .001$). Students with a median household income below \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 7.9%, $N = 1,972$ ($p < .001$). The median household income below \$62,028 was a differentiating factor in chronic absenteeism among students in the two-parent household composition group. After the income of the students in the group, race was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students with a median household income below \$62,028 in the group.

Black students in this group were chronically absent at a rate of 13.5%, $N = 1,571$ ($p < .001$). White students in this group were chronically absent at a rate of 3.0%, $N = 401$ ($p < .001$). Amongst students with a median household income below \$62,028, Black students were chronically absent at a higher rate of 13.5%. Race (Black) was a differentiating factor in chronic absenteeism among students in the group. After the race of the students in the group with a median household income below \$62,028, gender was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for Black students in the two-parent household composition group. Black females were chronically absent at a rate of 3.9%, $N = 223$ ($p < .001$). Black males were chronically absent at a rate of 22.8%, $N = 1,348$ ($p < .001$). Among Black students with a median household income below \$62,028, males were chronically absent at a higher rate. Gender (male) was a differentiating factor in chronic absenteeism among students in the two-parent household composition group with a median household income below \$62,028.

For students with a median household income above \$62,028, gender was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students in the two-parent household composition group. Females were chronically absent at a rate of 0.6%, $N = 170$ ($p < .001$). Males were chronically absent at a rate of 1.4%, $N = 436$ ($p < .001$). Gender (male) was a determining factor for chronic absenteeism among students in this group. Among students with a median household income above \$62,028, after gender, race was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for males in the two-parent household composition group.

Black males with a median household income above \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 1.7%, $N = 266$ ($p < .001$). White males with a median household income above \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 1.1%, $N = 170$ ($p < .001$). Gender (male), Race (Black), and income (below \$62,008) were found to be variables that differentiated students in terms of chronic absenteeism. Specifically, the higher rates of chronic absenteeism amongst Black male students with a median household income below \$62,028 were determining factors in chronic absenteeism in the sample. After the race of the male students in the group with a median household income above \$62,028, no other factors were determined for chronic absenteeism in the sample.

For the single-mother household composition group, after the number of students in each household composition group, income was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students in the single-mother household composition group. Students with a median household income above \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 2.3%, $N = 1,101$ ($p < .001$). Students with a median household income below \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 7.6%, $N = 1,561$ ($p < .001$). Income (below \$62,028) was a differentiating factor in chronic absenteeism among students in the single-mother household composition group with a

rate of 7.6%. After the median household income of the students in the group, gender was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students in the single-mother household composition group with a median household income below \$62,028.

Moreover, females were chronically absent at a rate of 4.9%, $N = 489$ ($p < .001$). Males were chronically absent at a rate of 10.2%, $N = 1,072$ ($p < .001$). Among students with a median household income below \$62,028, males were chronically absent at a higher rate of 10.2%. Gender (male) was a differentiating factor in chronic absenteeism rates among students in the single-mother household composition group. After the gender of the students with a median household income below \$62,028, race was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students in the single-mother household composition group.

Furthermore, Black males were chronically absent at a rate of 10.9%, $N = 489$ ($p < .001$). White males were chronically absent at a rate of 9.5%, $N = 486$ ($p < .001$). Black females were chronically absent at a rate of 6.1%. White females were chronically absent at a rate of 3.8%, $N = 198$ ($p < .001$). Among chronically absent students with a median household income below \$62,028, Black males were chronically absent at the highest rate of 10.9%. Race (Black) was a differentiating factor in chronic absenteeism among students in the single-mother household composition group with a median household income below \$62,028.

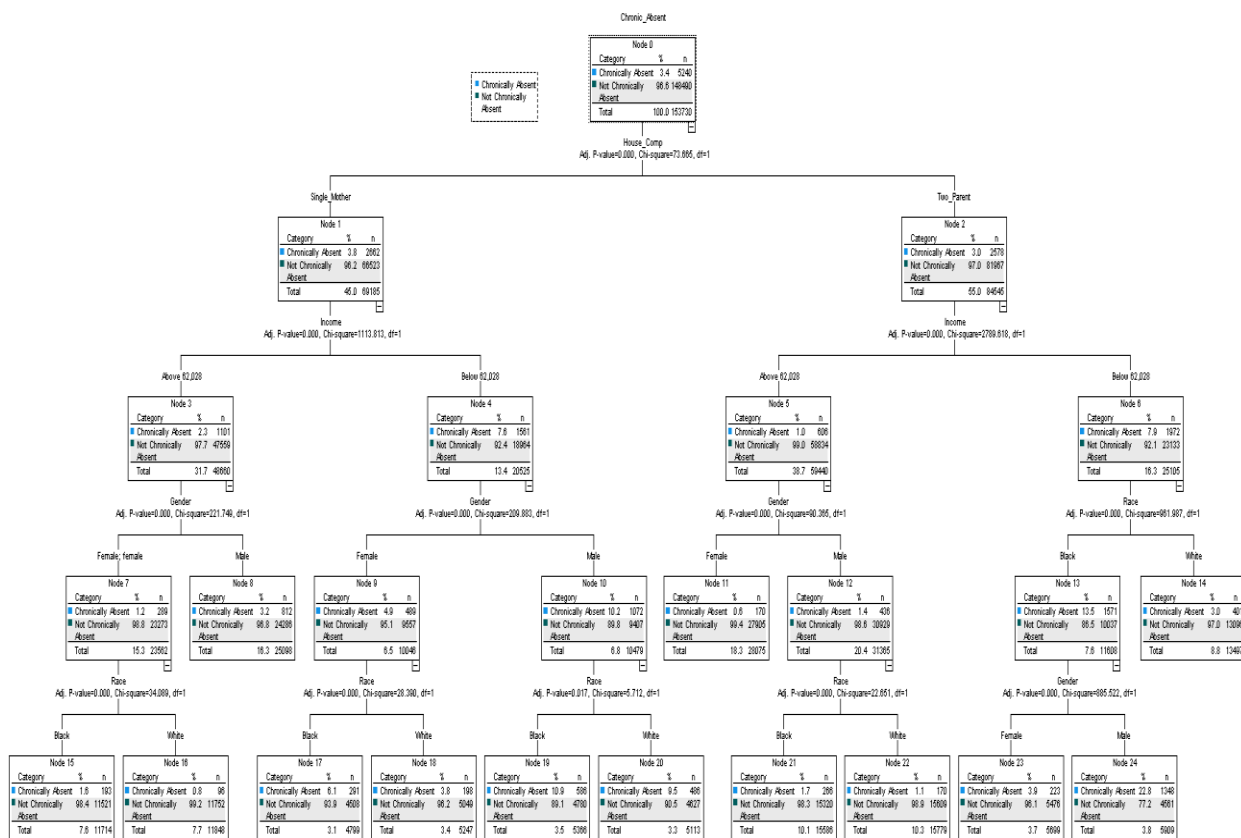
For students with a median household income above \$62,028, gender was the next most influential factor affecting chronic absenteeism for students in the group. Males were chronically absent at a rate of 3.2%, $N = 812$ ($p < .001$). Females were chronically absent at a rate of 1.2%, $N = 289$ ($p < .001$). Among students with a median household income above \$62,028, males were chronically absent at a higher rate of 3.2%. After the gender of the students with a median household income above \$62,028, race was the next most influential factor affecting chronic

absenteeism for females in the single-mother household composition group.

Black students were chronically absent at a rate of 1.6%, $N = 193$ ($p < .001$). White students were chronically absent at a rate of 0.8%, $N = 96$ ($p < .001$). Gender (male), Race (Black), and income (below \$62,008) were found to be variables that differentiated students in terms of chronic absenteeism. Specifically, the higher rates of chronic absenteeism among Black male students with a median household income below \$62,028 were determining factors in chronic absenteeism in the sample. After the race of the students in the single-mother household composition group with a median household income below \$62,028, no other factors were determined for chronic absenteeism in the sample.

Figure 5

Classification Tree Analysis Model Results (Chronic Absenteeism)



Null Hypothesis Two was rejected. Specifically, students from the two-parent household composition group: graduation (graduates), chronic absenteeism (chronically absent), male (gender), and race (Black) were found to be determining factors in chronic absenteeism rates and graduation rates in the sample. Single-mother household composition groups: race (White), gender (male), graduation (nongraduates), chronic absenteeism (not chronically absent), and income (below \$62,028) were found to be determining factors in chronic absenteeism rates and graduation rates in the sample. The best differential factors for students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions were race, not chronically absent, income below \$62,028, and nongraduates.

Assumption Screening for Null Hypothesis Two

Two CTA models were conducted to predict the factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. First, the appropriate measurement level (i.e., nominal) was assigned to all analysis variables. Second, for each categorical independent and dependent variable, a value label was defined for all categories included in the analysis. The data sets were screened for violations of assumption.

Summary of Assumption Screening

Assumption screening was performed prior to data analysis. Overall, race: Black (B) and White (W), gender: male (M) and female (F), household composition: two-parent (2) and single-mother (1), graduation: nongraduate (No) and graduate (Yes), chronic absenteeism: chronically absent (Y) and not chronically absent (N) and income: above \$62,028 (A) and below \$62,028 (B) met all the assumptions prior to analysis. Refer to Table 3 for assumption screening results for each variable.

Table 3*Results of Assumption Screening for Null Hypothesis Two*

Assumption	Results
Measurement Level Assigned (Nominal)	Assumption Not Violated
Defined Value Labels	Assumption Not Violated

Summary

In conclusion, there were 153,730 participants in this study. The study investigated the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. In addition, this study examined the factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. Null Hypothesis One: There is no relationship between household compositions of African American male students, graduation, and chronic absenteeism was rejected (Figure 3. Classification Tree Analysis Model Results: Relationship between Variables). Null Hypothesis Two: There are no factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions was rejected (Figure 4. Classification Tree Analysis Model Results: Graduation) and Figure 5. Classification Tree Analysis Model Results: Chronic Absenteeism). In Chapter Five, these findings will be compared to the research literature. Additionally, Chapter Five presents the implications, conclusions, and future research recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Chapter Five discusses the results for each of the two hypotheses in the context of the theoretical framework and related literature that guided the study. This chapter also describes a summary of the study by restating the research problem, the research questions, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the methodology, and the review of additional literature. Chapter Five reviews the research questions and provides an interpretation of the data obtained to answer each question. In addition, Chapter Five describes the importance of the results in relation to prior research in the field. This chapter is divided into five major sections: discussion, implications, limitations, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. African American male students have the lowest graduation rate and the highest chronic absenteeism rate among all major demographic groups in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The problem addressed in this study is the lack of available research data on graduation, chronic absenteeism, and household composition. The objective of this study is to develop new academic interventions, attendance programs, paternal involvement programs, and mentorship programs to decrease chronic absenteeism and increase graduation for African American male students.

This study is significant to African American male students, as it investigated the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation, which may affect their future financial stability and employment

opportunities. The employment rate for young adult high school completers was 67% and 51% for those who did not complete high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017b). Research data from 2020 shows that the Black unemployment rate was 16.6% in May 2020, and by August 2020, it was 13.2%. Conversely, the White unemployment rate fell to 6.9% in August 2020 from a high of 12.8% in April (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The unemployment rate for Black males (15.3%) was substantially higher than other subgroups and gender, reflecting, to some extent, a pattern of systemic racism that has constrained African American males' labor market opportunities (Neumark, 2018). The U.S. Census Bureau (2018) reported that 25.9% of individuals without a high school diploma lived in poverty compared to 14% of individuals with only a high school diploma.

The study used a quantitative correlational research design and an archival sampling method. The independent variables (household composition, race, gender, and income) and the categorical dependent variables (graduation and chronic absenteeism) were analyzed. The variables as represented by null hypotheses one and two included six categorical variables: race: Black and White, gender: male and female, graduation: nongraduate and graduate, household composition: single-mother and two-parent, chronic absenteeism: not chronically absent and chronically absent, and income: above \$62,028 and below \$62,028. Household composition and the median household income archival data were collected from the U.S. Census Bureau by the nine-digit zip codes. Graduation and chronic absenteeism archival data were collected from the SCDE by the nine-digit zip codes.

The archival data were used to analyze the relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The archival data were also used to identify what factors best differentiate students with single mother household compositions from students with two-

parent household compositions. The null hypotheses were analyzed using CTA models with a CHAID growth method and a Pearson's correlation coefficient with a Bonferroni adjusted p-value. CHAID measured the statistical significance by the sum of squares of standardized differences between observed and expected frequencies of the target variable.

Research Question One

Research Question One: Is there a statistically significant relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation for African American male students? Hence, Null Hypothesis One stated there is no relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The null hypothesis was rejected. The correlation between two-parent household composition, graduation, and chronic absenteeism was significant and predicted higher rates (70.3%) of graduation for chronically absent Black male students. The correlation between single-mother household composition, graduation, and chronic absenteeism was significant and predicted lower rates (66.3%) of graduation for Black chronically absent male students.

A review of the prior literature showed that two-parent households had been associated with lower chronic absenteeism and higher graduation for African American males (Gottfried & Hutt, 2019; Ingul et al., 2012). Balfanz and Byrnes (2013) reported that low-income, inner-city African American children from single-mother households arrive late to school more often than African American children from two-parent households, affecting their instructional time, education attainment, and chronic absenteeism. In addition, consistent evidence in the literature supported the idea that African American male students with absent father households were more likely to have lower graduation rates and lower rates of school attendance compared to African American male students with present father households (Amato et al., 2015; Henry et al., 2012).

On a national level, the AGCR for African American males from absent father households in 2017 was 52%, and the AGCR for African American males was 78% (Musu-Gillette, 2017). In conjunction with prior studies, the results of this study yielded results that were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Results support that two-parent households predicted higher rates of graduation and lower rates of chronic absenteeism. Single-mother households predicted lower rates of graduation and higher rates of chronic absenteeism.

Research has shown that father absence is associated with low GPAs, grade retention, low scores on high school state exit exams, and low graduation rates in African American males (Amato et al., 2015; Turney, 2017). Amato et al. (2015) found that males from absent father household compositions had lower test scores on math and verbal achievement tests compared to their counterparts from present father household compositions. The differences in scores were prevalent among African American males. In 2016, math and reading test scores among African American male students with absent fathers averaged 28 points lower than scores of African American male students with present fathers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017a). Paternal incarceration contributes to even lower rates of high school completion and higher rates of chronic school absences among African American male students (Jacobsen, 2019; Sykes & Pettit, 2014). Moreover, Turney (2017) reported that African American male students with a history of paternal incarceration had lower GPAs. African American males with lower GPAs also had a 47.5% rate of graduation when their father was incarcerated.

The results of Null Hypothesis One supported the theory. Bowen (1978) asserted an emotionally cutoff father would have an adverse impact on the academic functioning and school attendance of adolescent males. The term cutoff refers to the emotional discontinuation in a relationship whereby meaningful contact becomes limited or nonexistent. Growing up with an

emotionally cutoff father can progressively lead African American male students to increments in misbehavior, grade retention, failure to graduate, and eventually drop out (Keller & Noone, 2020). The physical and emotional absence of a father causes the family system to move towards dysfunction (Xu et al., 2019). In BFST, the emotional dynamics and interactions in the familial subsystem cause adolescents to take on adult stressors and anxiety that affect other areas of their lives, including school attendance, academic functioning, and behavior (Sheehan & Friedlander, 2015).

Research Question Two

Research Question One: What factors best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions? Hence, Null Hypothesis Two stated that there are no factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. Null Hypothesis Two was rejected. White, Nongraduate, not chronically absent, income below \$62,028, and male were identified as factors for students in the single-mother household composition group. Black, graduate, chronically absent, and male were identified as factors for students in the two-parent household composition group. Race, not chronically absent, nongraduate, and income below \$62,028 were identified as factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions.

A review of the prior literature showed that generally, adolescents with single mothers have a lower standard of living than adolescents with two-parents. The family's household income is a good predictor of grades, GPA, school attendance, and education attainment (Amato et al., 2015). In Figure 5 (Chronic Absenteeism), Black male students were more chronically absent when their median household income was below \$62,028 regardless of their household

type. Black male students were more chronically absent in two-parent household compositions when their median household income was below \$62,028. Lower socioeconomic status was more detrimental for chronically absent Black male students. In contrast, lower socioeconomic status was more detrimental for White female nongraduate students.

In some studies, males have been more chronically absent than females. Other researchers have found females to be more chronically absent than males, implying that these gender differences are not consistent (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Smerillo et al. (2018) reported that chronic absenteeism presents a greater threat of attaining a high school diploma for males than females. Autor et al. (2016) examined the effects of family characteristics, such as the mother's level of education, father presence, socioeconomic status, school performance, and high school graduation. The researchers found that two-parent household compositions have significantly greater effects on school absences in Grades 3 through 12 for boys compared to girls. The increased prevalence of single-mother household compositions also exacerbates contact with a stable same-sex parent and may have a particularly negative impact on African American males. Thus, it contributes to the growing gender gap in graduation (Autor & Wasserman, 2013). The results of this study yielded that Black males were more chronically absent than females. Black males graduated at a higher rate in two-parent household compositions, whereas Black females graduated at a higher rate than Black males in single-mother household compositions.

African American male students appear most susceptible to the adverse educational effects of absent fathers (Boothroyd & Cross, 2017). Qureshi and Ahmad (2014) asserted that fatherless African American male students have a greater risk of factors that affect graduation: disproportionate rates of out-of-school suspension, transportation issues, chronic

absenteeism, insufficient access to the internet, lack of financial resources, food insecurity, and poverty. Research data from the U.S. Department of Education (2019) indicated that in public school education and all other demographic male and female subgroups, African American male students are the least likely to secure a diploma four years after beginning high school. In contrast with prior studies, Null Hypothesis Two yielded statistically significant results at the $p < .05$ level. The results do not support prior studies in that race (Black) is usually associated with low rates of graduation, and two-parent households are associated with low chronic absenteeism (not chronically absent). Black males graduated at the highest rate in two-parent households and the second-lowest rate in single-mother households. Black males were most chronically absent in two-parent household compositions.

Subsequently, nongraduates and income below \$62,028 were supported by prior studies. Race (White), income (below \$62,028), graduation (nongraduate), and chronic absenteeism (not chronically absent) were identified as factors that best differentiated students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. Overall, Black male students in the two-parent household composition group graduated at a rate of 87.1% compared to Black male students in the single-mother household composition group 82.9%. Black male students in the single-mother household compositions with a median household income below \$62,028 were chronically absent at a rate of 10.9% compared to Black male students in the two-parent household compositions with a median household income below \$62,028 at a rate of 22.8%.

The results of Null Hypothesis Two partially supported the theory. Bowen's theory explains the complexity of families and the patterns of behaviors guiding the family. BFST was appropriate for this study due to its ability to focus on different types of households, strengths,

and roles that exist within African American families (Erdem & Safi, 2018). No family is free from the influence of society, race, gender, and income. Within families, there are reciprocal movements of anxiety and stress from parent to child and from child to parent. How well the stress and anxiety are managed among family members will determine the adolescent's academic and behavioral functioning regardless of household composition type.

Kerr (2013) suggested that in two-parent household compositions, both parents typically contribute equally to the emotional and academic development, but in different ways. However, this simple advantage of having both parents in the household is a positive predictor of better school attendance and academic outcomes for adolescents. Yet, this advantage is not afforded to adolescents in single-mother households. Bowen (1978) posited that specific characteristics in families such as poverty, anxiety, emotional dysfunction, and father absence would be predictive of adverse educational outcomes. Numerous researchers have argued that single-mother families have adverse effects on graduation rates for African American male students, which implies that financial contributions along with emotional support and paternal involvement play an important role in the lives of African American males (Monserud & Elder, 2013; Pitsoane & Gasa, 2018). Black males with income above \$62,028 graduated at a higher rate than Black males with income below \$62,028.

In BFST, the root cause of chronic absenteeism is embedded within the dysfunction and dynamics of the family (Breda, 2014; Keller & Noone, 2020). In other words, chronic absences can occur with any adolescent depending on the family dynamics and interactions in a continuum of functional vs. dysfunctional processes. Hoff et al. (2015) concluded that chronic absenteeism is higher among low-income African American male students; it has been found to be the leading cause of school disengagement, dropout, and failure to graduate high school. In Null Hypothesis

Two, Black males in the single-mother household compositions were chronically absent at a rate of 10.9% compared to Black males in the two-parent household compositions with a rate of 22.8%.

Implications

The findings of this study have multiple implications for African American families, educators, school counselors, African American male students, SCDE school administrators, and policymakers. The study contributed to the current body of literature on household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. In addition, the study contributed by identifying factors that differentiated students with single mothers from students with two-parents. Graduation and chronic absenteeism were the dependent variables, and household composition, race, income, and gender were the independent variables. Because of high rates of absenteeism and low rates of graduation among fatherless African American males, understanding the relationship between graduation, single-mother household compositions, and chronic absenteeism, educators, school administrators, and school counselors, may develop attendance programs, paternal involvement programs, new academic programs, and mentoring programs to increase graduation rates and decrease chronic absenteeism for African American male students.

The findings have implications for the development of school policies and programs that promote paternal involvement and engagement. The current research study results indicated that African American males graduated at a higher rate when fathers were present in the household. Shumow and Schmidt (2014) studied the impact of paternal engagement programs on high school students, which showed a positive association with paternal engagement at school and students' GPAs and graduation rates. Also, in a meta-analysis of 50 studies on paternal engagement, researchers found a connection between paternal involvement, reduced

absenteeism, and academic success (Costello, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that educators and school counselors implement counseling programs to understand the role fathers play in their son's education and how their involvement is received by educators. These factors are vitally important to the academic achievement of African American males living in a household with an emotionally cutoff father.

This study also has implications for family counseling. Family members in a household are interconnected, in which dysfunction or anxiety in one subsystem or family member may affect the entire nuclear family system (Bowen, 1978). Bowenian family therapy works well with families who have experienced a relationship cutoff. Fatherless African American males must be willing to establish a trusting relationship with a counselor in order to work through the feelings and emotions surrounding an absent father. Counselors need to develop strategies in which African American males can have an open and honest dialogue about their experiences as fatherless children.

Moreover, African American families need to gain an understanding and awareness of how the family structure and dynamics intersect with the other domains, particularly with respect to absenteeism and academic performance. Counselors can use a genogram as an assessment tool to understand the important relationships in a client's life. Furthermore, genograms may explain family dynamics and multigenerational patterns that currently affect the adolescent's life. Tobias (2019) found that family-based interventions and behavioral modification for persistent absenteeism were often hindered by an unstable home environment, and in some cases, school counselors provided students assistance at school.

Limitations

This study is limited since the participants were selected using an archival sample rather

than a random sample, eliminating the possibility of a population that is not representative of the targeted population (Duan et al., 2015). Therefore, the results from the targeted sample cannot be generalized to the broader population but are limited to a specific location and population. Pearl (2015) stated that generalizability is a threat to external validity. However, external validity is the extent to which the findings of a study are generalizable to new environments, settings, or sample populations (Kidd & Castano, 2017). By research design, correlational studies have high external validity.

Another limitation of this study is not using random assignment because the household composition data was divided into two categories based on imputed data. Randomly assigning students to a group may have adjusted the level of internal validity (Kidd & Castano, 2017). This correlational study has low internal validity because the variables race, household composition, graduation, chronic absenteeism, and gender were not manipulated during the study. However, the limitations had a minimal impact on this research study, as the results were intended to shed light and discover solutions to increase graduation rates and decrease chronic absenteeism for African American male students.

The lack of prior research studies on household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, graduation, gender, income, and race posed another limitation to this study. Prior researcher studies have identified additional characteristics that could have been used or considered in the current study. Hence, this limitation also provided an opportunity to identify a gap in previous research literature and, consequently, new investigations for future research studies and recommendations.

Another limitation to this study is the data collection process for archival data. Archival data is data that was established previously and apart from this study. There are several

unknowns about the procedures by which the original raw data were collected. Consequently, the data may be affected by problems, including missed or inconsistencies in the answers to questions and exaggerated responses. A researcher must find information on the data collection procedures through other means such as documentation, publications, and reports. This limitation may have minimal impact on the study because the data were collected from reputable agencies.

Additional limitations exist for correlational research designs. For example, variables can only be used to determine if a relationship exists. If a relationship does exist, the researcher can gather information about the strength and the direction of that relationship (Wilson, 2018). Correlational research can suggest that there is an association between two or more variables but cannot prove that one variable causes the other variable. In other words, correlational research does not equal causation. Causation was not addressed in this study, as it is a research design limitation (Bernard, 2017).

Recommendations for Future Research

Results confirmed a relationship between household composition, chronic absenteeism, and graduations for African American male students; however, more research on the topic should be explored. In addition, some factors differentiated students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. To investigate the impact of household composition on chronic absenteeism and graduation from a national perspective, researchers should conduct both qualitative and quantitative studies. As noted in the previous section, there is a lack of prior research on this specific topic. Hence, there are several recommendations for future research studies regarding the school attendance and the educational attainment of African American males from single-mother household compositions.

Recommendations for future research should focus on obtaining a larger sample size

in general. This would increase the statistical power of the research results, thus allowing for a greater measure of the significance of the research findings. A future study may include pre-test and post-test evaluations using reliable and valid assessments. Future research studies may evaluate participants' school attendance and academic performance (GPA) before and after implementing interventions: tutoring programs, paternal involvement programs, and mentoring programs, then assess if there is a difference in chronic absenteeism and graduation.

Further research could focus on high school students from different cultural, regional, and racial backgrounds in the United States. Hence, evaluating participants from other subgroups or other high schools throughout the United States may account for potential regional and racial/ethnic differences in chronic absenteeism and graduation rates. Future replications of this study may need to focus on the reason for father absence and the impact of chronic absenteeism and graduation. The participants should be divided into subgroups: incarcerated fathers, divorced fathers, deceased fathers, and military deployed fathers. It is also recommended that future research examine the cultural and racial backgrounds in conjunction with the family characteristics and family structure.

Moreover, future studies could focus on family characteristics: extended family support, socioeconomic status, urban versus suburban communities, the son's age at father's absence (early childhood or middle childhood), and the mother's education level. The final research recommendation should focus on school-related factors that impact high school completion, including grades, attendance, student-teacher relationships, discipline, and school climate.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. A CTA

with a CHAID growth method and a Pearson's correlation coefficient were used to evaluate the statistical relationship between the variables. Evaluation of prior research literature and the evaluation and the discussion of the research results answered the null hypotheses in this study. The first CTA model (Figure 3) determined that there was a statistically significant relationship between household compositions of African American male students, chronic absenteeism, and graduation. The second and third CTA models (Figure 4 and Figure 5) determined that there were factors that best differentiate students with single-mother household compositions from students with two-parent household compositions. Both Null Hypotheses One and Two were rejected at a 0.05 level of significance. Recommendations for further research were discussed in detail, which included studies containing participants with a diverse background from different regions of the United States, pre-test and post-test evaluations, larger sample sizes, and the inclusion of additional research methodologies.

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APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter

December 8, 2020

Melissa Garrett-Moultrie
Frederick Volk

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY20-21-431 A Correlational Study on Household Composition, Chronic Absenteeism, and Graduation among African American Males

Dear Melissa Garrett-Moultrie and Frederick Volk,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

- (1) It will not involve the collection of identifiable, private information.

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

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word research with the word project throughout both documents.

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

Sincerely,

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

APPENDIX B: Graduation and Chronic Absenteeism Data Request Letter

Dear Sir /Madam,

19 September 2020

My name is Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie. I am a Doctoral student at Liberty University. I need a letter to submit to my Institution Review Board (IRB). The letter just needs to state that SCDE will be able to provide the following information without any personally identifiable information in the data. I will need this letter to submit with my IRB application.

I would like to request data for five, four-year adjusted cohort cycles

(1) 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 (starting with 9th grade 2011)

(2) 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015

(3) 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016

(4) 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017

(5) 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 (ending with 12th grade 2018) for African American males, African American females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females from grade 9 to 12. Whether each student graduated, “Yes” or “No.” Whether each student had chronic absenteeism for each year in high school, “Yes” or “No” If a student was chronically absent, then I am requesting the number of days each year. If data on chronic absenteeism is not available, the data on truancy will suffice as well as the number of days. I would like the zip code for each student listed in PowerSchool.

Thank you,

Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie

APPENDIX C: Author's Permission Letter (South Carolina Department of Education)



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RE: Research Data Request of September 19, 2020, Reference # D000674-091820.

Dear Melissa Moultrie,

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) received your data request dated September 19, 2020. You requested:

“Upon request, I would like to have access to five, four-year adjusted cohort cycles.”

- (1) 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 (starting with 9th grade 2011)**
- (2) 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015**
- (3) 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016**
- (4) 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017**
- (5) 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 (ending with 12th grade 2018)**

for African American males, African American females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females. Whether each student graduated, “Yes” or “No”. Whether each student had chronic absenteeism in high school, “Yes” or “No”. In addition, I would like to request the nine-digit zip code for each student listed in PowerSchool.

Thank you,

Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie"

Please note that it is against South Carolina law to obtain or use personal information from public records for commercial solicitation. S.C. Code Ann. § 30-2-30 and -50. That law defines “personal information” as:

[I]information that identifies or describes an individual including, but not limited to, an individual's photograph or digitized image, social security number, date of birth, driver's identification number, name, home address, home telephone number, medical or

disability information, education level, financial status, bank account numbers, account or identification number issued by or used, or both, by any federal or state governmental agency or private financial institution, employment history, height, weight, race, other physical details, signature, biometric identifiers, and any credit records or reports.

There are criminal penalties involved for noncompliance with the state's prohibitions against using information secured through a records request for commercial solicitation.

We do not make public, and will not produce in response to your request, those records that may be exempted under state law, including, but not limited to, trade secrets, personal information of students, confidential proprietary information, privileged communications, or protected information. We do not provide personally identifiable student or educator information. For a partial list of exemptions under the law, please see S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-40. Additionally, we abide by all laws and regulations pertaining to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and the S.C. Family Privacy Protection Act, and do not make public any records protected under these Acts.

In regard to your request, please visit the SCDE Public Records Center to download the nonexempt requested records. There is one file per graduation cohort. We only started reporting Chronic Absenteeism recently, so it is only available for the last three files.

We have responded to your request and granted you permission to access and use the nonexempted, requested information. Your data request has been met and it is now closed.

If you have any further questions, please respond to this email.

Sincerely,

FOIA Officer
South Carolina Department of Education

APPENDIX D: Household Composition Data Request Letter

Dear Sir /Madam,

19 September 2020

My name is Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie. I am a Doctoral student at Liberty University. I am requesting a letter to submit to my Institution Review Board (IRB). The letter just needs to state that the U.S. Census Bureau will be able to provide the following information upon request and that I will have permission to access and use the requested data. It is very important to have the data stripped of any private or identifiable information prior to releasing the data files.

Upon request, I would like to have access to the tables and data files for the composition of two-parent households and the composition of single-parent homes for African Americans and Caucasians for South Carolina, in which a mother is the head of household by the nine-digit zip codes from 2011 to 2018.

Thank you,

Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie

APPENDIX E: Author's Permission Letters (U.S. Census Bureau)**U.S. Census Bureau: GS-157372**

Inbox

Tues, OCT
27, 2:20 PM**Census Help <census.help@census.gov>**

to me


Greetings Melissa,

Case #: GS-157372

Subject: Household Composition Raw Data from 2011 to 2018

Response Time Stamp:

10/27/20 3:20 PM

Comment:

Hi Melissa,

Here is the link giving you permission to access and use the tables and data files. Please make sure you are using Chrome. If there is an issue, please reach out to cedsci.feedback@census.gov with as much detail as you can about what you are experiencing. The above tables and data files do not contain identifiable or private information.

Thanks!

Amanda

To provide an additional comment or question related to this case, please [click here](#).

Very respectfully,

U.S. Census Bureau Customer Support

U.S. Census Bureau: GS-160193

Inbox



Wed, NOV 18,
3:59 PM

Census Help <census.help@census.gov>

to me

Greetings Melissa,

Case #: GS-160193

Subject: Household Composition Raw Data from 2011 to 2018

Response Time Stamp:

Comment:

Hi Melissa,

To add in 5-year ACS data by Zip Code Tabulation Area (ZCTA)
Click on the Geographies button in the toolbar at the top of the table

- Choose Geography -> Zip Code Tabulation Area (Nine-Digit) ->
- Within Other Geographies -> Zip Code Tabulation Area (Nine-Digit)
- Now you can choose "All ZCTAs in United States", or choose individual
- ZCTAs by either scrolling and selecting or searching using
- the magnifying glass immediately above the ZCTA list

Alternatively, you can choose ZCTAs by:

11/18/20 4:59 PM

- Click on the Geographies button in the toolbar at the top of the table.
- Choose Geography -> Choose "Show Summary Levels"
- Scroll down to select "860 - 9-digit ZCTA"
- Now you can choose "All ZCTAs in United States", or
- choose individual ZCTAs by either scrolling and selecting or
- searching using the magnifying glass immediately above the ZCTA list

Unfortunately, there is no easy way at this time to add in all ZCTAs within a state. If you are interested in this feature, please email cedsci.feedback@census.gov. They regularly make improvements to the site based on user feedback.

Thanks!

Amanda

To provide an additional comment or question related to this case, please [click here](#).

Very respectfully,

U.S. Census Bureau Customer Support

APPENDIX F: Median Household Income Data Request Letter

Dear Sir /Madam,

19 January 2021

My name is Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie, I am a Doctoral student at Liberty University. I am requesting a letter to submit as a part my dissertation. I would like to have access to the tables and data files for the median household income by the nine-digit zip codes for African Americans and Caucasians in South Carolina for two-parent households and for households in which a mother is the head of household from 2011 to 2018.

The letter just needs to state that the U.S. Census Bureau will be able to provide the following information and that I will have permission to access and use the requested data. It is very important to have the data stripped of any private or identifiable information prior to releasing the data files.

Thank you,

Melissa E. Garrett-Moultrie

APPENDIX G: Author's Permission Letter (U.S. Census Bureau)**U.S. Census Bureau: GS-188311**

Inbox

Thur, JAN
21, 6:41 AM**Census Help <census.help@census.gov>**

to me

Greetings Melissa,

Case #: GS-188311

Subject: Median Household income in South Carolina by household type and zip codes

Response Time Stamp: Comment:

1/21/21 7:41 PM

Good morning Melissa,

Here is the link giving you permission to access and use the tables and data files. Thank you for reaching out with your request. We do not recommend overlapping years, so you will want to specify 2009-2013 and 2014-2018 5-year ACS estimates for all ZCTAs (the Census' version of Zip Codes) in South Carolina for Table S1901.

Best,

Mary

To provide an additional comment or question related to this case, please [click here](#).

Very respectfully,

U.S. Census Bureau Customer Support