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An Exploration of Exposure to Music in High School Males in Appalachian Ohio

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Abstract

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MA, Muskingum University, 1996

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Human Services

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Abstract

Even with increasing availability of alternative educational systems, individual learning plans, and vocational schools, the high school dropout rate among males is still rising. High school dropouts have a negative effect on a community because their chances of being employed and contributing to the community are reduced. The theoretical frameworks of multiple intelligences, self-efficacy, and developmental constructivism were used to conduct a hermeneutical phenomenological study of the lived experiences of a specific population of male youth in rural Ohio who decided to return to school and complete the requirements for a high school diploma or GED after being exposed to music education. The specific focus of inquiry was on the role that their musical education or exposure to music, as a means of developing and accessing an alternative way of learning, might have played in their decisions. A purposive sample of seven males ages 18–22 years who had dropped out of school and subsequently returned to complete their GED participated in the study. Data were collected in semi-structured interviews and analyzed using hermeneutical phenomenological content analysis, validated by independent peer review. Findings from the study indicated that music played a key role in participants' lives as a stress reducer, and music education escalated feelings of self-worth, contributing to ability to focus on their GED completion. This study impacts social change by identifying previously undervalued strategies to support young men returning to complete high school or GED education.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my five incredible children, Leah, Nathan, Joseph, Benjamin, and Micah, my constant supporters, who have always believed in me and who have been my cheer team. I give all glory and praise to my Lord Jesus Christ, who inspired me to do this and gave me the strength to finish this assignment. I also dedicate this study to my humorous brother Daryl, who kept me laughing through the times I spent up at night while being nursed through a broken femur, trying to finish my assignments; to my brother Reggie, who has been a wonderful big brother; to my mother, who has been a model and example of strength, tenacity, and love; and to my dad who passed away shortly after I broke my femur, who showed me an example of endurance and pursuit as an amputee who never complained. Finally, to my great spiritual friends who loved me, prayed for me, and encouraged me through this process. I love you all. This is our achievement!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The successful completion of formal education can be impeded by many factors (Baer, 2010). Being the first in the family to graduate could present challenges. Cultural factors can also affect educational outcomes; for example, I n some cultures, education is not a primary goal (Baer, 2010). Research has shown that influences at home and in the community (Vygotsky, 1962) as well as at school can affect a student's educational outcomes (Ohmer, Warner, & Beck, 2010). Socioeconomic status, beliefs, and perceptions about educational goals can also affect education outcomes (Cowdery, 2010). The self-confidence required for motivation to study and to pursue career goals can be affected by cultural-social environments (Haag, 2010). Finally, different people learn in different ways (Gardner, 1993), and schools are not always equipped to deal adequately with various learning styles.

The high school dropout rate is a significant problem in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), nearly 7,000 students drop out of school every day, totaling 1.2 million students per year. Specific to the focus of the present study, it is known that the dropout rate among male students in the Appalachian region is extremely high. In the Appalachian population in the Ohio county that was the focus of the present study, 30% of all individuals 17 years of age and older do not have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate (Kids Count Data Center, 2011).

Completing high school is important for many reasons. It shows discipline and credibility to finish a commitment. It increases choices for future life goals. Employers want employees who are capable of performing job tasks. Many industries and businesses will only consider individuals with high school diplomas for some job positions (Amos, 2008). Studies show that education improves life-long employability. Without a high school diploma or a GED, the likelihood of getting a high-paying job, continuing to higher education, or becoming a viable employed citizen is diminished (Amos, 2008). Not having a high school education can also have a negative effect on a community's economic well-being (Lahm, 2009). The overall effect on the economy is substantial. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012), if the 1.2 million students who drop out of school each year had received a high school diploma, it would have increased the U.S. economy by $154 billion.

The purpose of the present study was to explore the lived experiences of Appalachian male youth in the target county who dropped out of school and then returned to school and successfully completed the coursework necessary to receive a high school diploma or GED. In addition, the present study sought to identify the factors that motivated these individuals to return to school as well as the factors that aided their success. One of the study's assumptions was that knowing more about these factors could help address issues with dropouts, both in the targeted community and others, and identify better ways to reach them and to build on their self-efficacy and self-beliefs so that they can return to school, complete their degrees, and become contributors to society. Specific to the present study and the target population, the hope was to identify if and

how exposure to music education might have influenced their perceptions of self-efficacy and aided their return to school and successful completion of their degrees.

This chapter presents the basic issues that shaped the present study as well as the problem statement and the purpose of the study. Also included are the research questions, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, the nature of the study, definitions of key terms used and the present study's assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. It concludes with a brief discussion of the study's significance and an overview of ensuing chapters.

Background

Many variables can impede the successful completion of formal education. Specific to Appalachian, these factors include an emphasis on more collectivistic values including close family ties (exclusion of outsiders, a strong sense of religion, being less open to change), and upholding family structure and traditions (Caprara et al., 2008), all of which do not necessarily support education as a primary life goal. Researchers have noted various reasons why students imitate family behavior even if it is not to their advantage (Lahm, 2009). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that children's early development processes come from nonverbal conceptual assessments. The parent's model of emotional expressions creates nonverbal messages to their children (Cole, Teti, & Zahn-Waxler, 2003).

Socioeconomic status can also be a factor. Some of these areas, such as the Appalachian regions of West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio, have been identified as economically distressed and at high risk for low educational attainment.

According to the Kids Count Data Center (2011), the dropout rates in these Appalachian areas are almost double the national average.

Different people learn in different ways, and schools, especially those in disadvantaged areas, are not always adequately equipped to deal with various learning styles (Gardner, 1993). Gardner embraced the premise that there are multiple intelligences and noted that the ways in which people learn are measurable through more than just test taking. Recognizing different learning styles can expose different kinds of intelligences.

How an individual views the self is a significant factor in the individual's capacity for learning. Students can be empowered to believe they can succeed beyond their family culture. They can be encouraged to put forth the effort to become competent in the courses required to finish school (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, students' perceptions about their self-efficacy regarding educational achievement can be influenced by their learning styles as well as the teaching techniques and styles employed by teachers (Gardner, 1983).

A society's musical culture can greatly influence a child's developmental cycles (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky purposed that children learn cognitively from their families preceding physical development. The parent's emotional competency can affect how children respond to the value of education (Cole et al., 2003). Students could be empowered to believe that they can succeed beyond their family culture; they can be encouraged to put forth the effort to become competent in the courses required to finish school (Bandura, 1986).

Although Gardner (1983) presented a large body of literature on the theory of multiple intelligences, there is limited research examining Gardner's musical intelligence in high-risk youth, particularly high school dropouts (Helding, 2010). Music is a leading cultural construct in Appalachian culture and plays a key role in many family structures and traditions in this area. "Appalachian people share a common cultural heritage that is expressed through their speech and dialect, their building methods and crafts, their religions and superstitions, and, most of all, their music" (Appalachian Folk Music, n.d., para. 1). For certain youth, educational approaches that focus on this specific intelligence might be the key to success. The problem is that this is an area that has had limited study to date.

Problem Statement

Youth in Appalachia are at higher risk than the national average for dropping out of high school (Kids Count Data Center, 2011). The problem is families in these region present generational patterns of unemployment without high school diplomas (Lahm, 2009). Among the Appalachian Ohio population in Muskingum County, 30% of all individuals age 17 years and over do not have a diploma or a GED certificate (Kids Count Data Center, 2011). However, some individuals from this area have returned to school and successfully completed their education. While research results have identified these issues, I have not found literature that details the lived experiences of Appalachian youth who have been exposed to musical education and their perceptions of education in general as it relates to returning to school and finishing their degrees. The problem is there is a lack of research focusing on the lived experiences of Appalachian male high

school dropouts ages 18–22 years who have been exposed to music education and the factors that contributed to their decision to return to school to complete the coursework for a high school diploma or a GED. It is essential for the well-being of similar populations as well as for society in general that ways be found to decrease high school dropout rates and increase high school graduation rates, and it was an assumption of this study that learning more about the identified population would contribute to finding these ways.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to research and capture the textured expressions of the lived and reflective experiences of Appalachian males who have dropped out of high school and then returned to school to complete their degrees. Specifically, I examined the lived experiences of students who dropped out of school in regard to what ways exposure to music or musical education might have influenced their decisions to return to school and complete the coursework necessary to receive a high school diploma or GED. I focused on Appalachian males in Ohio who have been exposed to music education and determined if this education impacted their self-esteem and self-value, thereby influencing them to return to school to complete the necessary coursework for a GED or high school diploma.

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the basis of the present study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of male high school dropouts ages 18–22

years regarding their decision to return to school to complete the coursework

necessary for receiving a high school diploma or GED?

RQ2: What role might music have played in the decision to return to school to

complete the necessary coursework?

Theoretical/Conceptual Frameworks

Several theoretical frameworks were used in the present study. First was

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner held that there is no single type of

intelligence or dominant intelligence; instead, intelligence has many facets or modalities

(Gardner, 1983). Gardner's (1983) theory provides an outline for the human cognitive

developmental process. He identified eight different abilities or intelligences that a person

could possess: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical,

bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Further, Gardner argued

that intelligence was categorized into three primary or overarching categories: (a) being

able to create an effective product or offer a service that a culture values, (b) possessing a

set of problem-solving skills, and (c) being able to find or create solutions for problems

by gathering new information or knowledge (Gardner, 2000a).

Gardner (2000a) asserted that no single type of intelligence is better than another

and that finding a balance in each person's uniqueness and mix of these intelligences will

show their greatest potential. In education, the basic application of Gardner's theory of

multiple intelligences is to help teachers recognize students' individual cognitions and

then use this recognition to tailor how the material is presented; in effect, teaching the

same subject from eight different perspectives. Variations of unique learning experiences encourage students to become lifelong learners. Helping students define their learning style develops a consistency in retrieving information (Keene, 2008). Different ways of learning and different ways of defining intelligence can give students an educational advantage (Gardner, 2000b).

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy was the second theory underlying the present study. Bandura developed this construct to help explain how people control their self-determined judgments and resulting actions. It can also be seen as a personal agency tool that reflects how people feel about their ability to execute various tasks and roles (Bandura, 1989).

According to Bandura (1989), self-efficacy consists of elements of self-persuasion that individuals glean from bits and pieces of information regarding their perspectives on their mastery of previous performances, vicarious experiences, comparing themselves with others, verbal persuasion from social influences, and their physiological states at these times. Bandura stated that cognitive, affective, personal, and environmental factors determine human motivation and actions and that the human cognitive process consists of thought patterns that either assist or impede the ability to carry out various tasks. The human cognitive process also relies on the ability to derive inferences regarding current situations while at the same time accounting for past experiences, which is then used to predict future performance. Through this process, it is possible for individuals to gauge their abilities in specific contexts, which then allows for engaging the behaviors necessary for effectively completing tasks for fulfilling roles.

Self-efficacy research supports that there is a relationship between perception and motivation. Gardner (1983) postulated that intrapersonal intelligence is a personal concept of one's emotions and is critical to one's quality of life. Choices made can be potentially disastrous without an introspective/intrapersonal view of oneself. Music relates to intrapersonal intelligence by promoting empathy while experiencing the arts (Helding, 2010). Ways to confront challenges while conquering fears and embodying learning can be provided through music. Participating in music and creating music may provide an experience of increased self-esteem. This phenomenon can be explored through phenomenological inquiry, researching the meaning and effects of the phenomenon through participants' experiences (Cloonan, 1998).

Vygotsky's developmental constructivism theory was the third theory underlying the present study. Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning precedes development due to the immediate influences of culture and historical environment. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) reflects the distance between one's present learning level and one's potential learning ability. ZPD holds that the educational/developmental process of scaffolding, where social support is provided to move the child to the upper area of the ZPD, is where learning takes place. Therefore, cultural and social influences come to the learner first, and then they develop (Vygotsky, 1896/1934). In essence, Vygotsky's ZPD supports that children can learn beyond where they are developmentally. There is more detailed information on all three theories in Chapter 3.

Nature of the Study

This was a phenomenological study. This approach was chosen because it allows for investigating the reflections of the experiences as the participants lived them rather than investigating the concepts that derive from the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) described phenomenological research as revealing such rich experiences that the readers themselves can also have a lived experience.

The specific phenomenological approach for the present investigation was hermeneutical phenomenology. According to Moustakas (1994), this approach seeks to understand the experience of the participant by adding meaning from different perspective and lenses. The science of hermeneutics helps communicate the phenomena of the reflective experiences and contextualize that communication. Through a researcher's comprehensive knowledge and comprehension, the exploration of the participants' experiences can be given meaning (van Manen, 1990).

I explored step-by-step the lived experiences of male Appalachians who dropped out of high school and the factors that were influential in their decision to return to school and graduate. Using Gardner's (1983, 1993) theory of multiple intelligences and prospect of individualistic learning, I investigated how music, used as a conduit for character building, may have influenced their educational goals.

A purposive sample of seven males ages 18–22 years was sought for the present study. Inclusion criteria included the area of residence (county), having been a high school dropout and then returning to school to complete their degree, and participation in some sort of music education. Participants were recruited from TRiO-Student Support

Services at Zane State College in Zanesville, Ohio, and the Adult Basic and Literacy

Education program in the following Ohio counties: Belmont, Harrison, Morgan, Noble,

Guernsey, Monroe, Muskingum and Washington. There are 12 different program sites in

these counties. Other avenues, such as social networking and personal and professional

connections in Ohio counties, were also employed. Potential participants were asked brief

questions to determine if they qualified for inclusion.

Data were collected via semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. The

interviews were built on two main components: in-depth conversation in order to achieve

a more meaningful understanding and the interviewee and interviewer becoming research

partners rather than a question-and-answer examination (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). During

the interview, participants were free to interject questions about the study. They were told

that there are no wrong or right answers. The participants were free to express their

feelings, thoughts, and attitudes regarding the questions they were asked.

I took notes during the interview that outlined the interviewee's main

perspectives. A digital recorder was also used. Using the data collected from the

interviews and my notes, I analyzed and explored themes and patterns in the data. Using

a digital recorder during the interviews allowed me to review the audio data and

transcribe it into a written format. As Shank (2006) noted, self-transcription, as opposed

to using a transcriber, gives the researcher new insights and perspectives. Ross (1999)

contended there are differences between oral and written language and its context.

Therefore, the transcriptions become crucial for accuracy. Filtering out components of

cultural significances while translating captures its meaningfulness. This also gave me an

opportunity to reflect on the content separately from the emotional effects of participating in the interview. Because qualitative data is generally rich, detailed, and sensitive, I managed the amount of analyzed data and explored the deeper patterns. Using a highlighting approach (Stake, 2010) to filter through different variables and descriptors, my hope was to extract excerpts showing relationships in the contextual content. More detail on data collection and analysis procedures can be found in Chapter 3.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are provided for clarity and to assist understanding of the present study's concepts.

Art intervention: Art intervention is an interaction that communicates an interpretation being employed by the client's self-expression (Travis & Bowman, 2011). Using various forms of art can lead to person-centered cognitive behavior, reconcile emotional conflicts, and help individuals become more self-aware.

At-risk youth: This term describes academically disadvantaged students who might also be disabled. These youth are usually characterized by their social, economic, and probationary status due to behavioral issues (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Cultural influences: These are influences from one's heritage and family, including language, religion, and social habits including music and art. The characteristics of a special or particular group of people are defined by these specific attributes (Gilton, 2012).

Learning disabilities: Learning disabilities usually involve language or mathematic processing and can lead to a number of cognitive and psychological issues.

Learning disabilities usually affect people of normal to high intelligence and are not the result of emotional or physical impairment (Robick, 2010).

Multicultural education: According to Banks and Banks (1995), multicultural education's main goal is to "create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups" (p. xi). Further, it aims to help all students acquire "knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good" (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. xi).

Multiple intelligences: Gardner's (1983, 1993) theory that each individual can possess eight different types of intelligences.

Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy is an individual's evaluation of self. It is the belief in one's abilities and approaches to tasks and challenges. Self-efficacy can be developed through self-perception (Bandura, 1986). This can also play a major role in self-value assessment. Influences from external sources can provide a positive or negative focus.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations of the Study

A key assumption was that all participants in the present study would give their unbiased attention to answering the questions they were asked during the semistructured interviews. Another key assumption was that they would answer the questions as completely and honestly as they could.

The geographical setting for the present study was a limitation. Additional research in other parts of the country and with larger sample sizes would be needed for

generalization of study findings. Broadening the inquiry to encompass other intelligences would have provided additional richness and robustness to this area of exploration.

A potential limitation was participants not feeling free to voice opinions that might conflict with their cultural heritage and family influences. To avoid any issues of interviewees feeling unconfortable, interviews took place in a neutral setting such as the library.

Delimitations are identifying population boundaries that may not be within the researcher's control. The specific focus on one aspect of intelligence was also a delimitation in the present study.

Significance

The goal of this study was to explore the experiences of male Appalachian high school students who dropped out and the factors that influenced their decision to return to school and graduate. Knowing more about these factors can help reduce the large number of students that are still dropping out of school. This knowledge could also change community cultures and significantly impact the future of our youth. If exposure to music is one of the influences that have helped raise self-value, then this knowledge could be used systemically to encourage incorporating music as a necessary core in educational curricula. Greater knowledge of these influences could encourage using different learning styles to increase self-confidence, increase self-values, and change personal perceptions.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I presented the present study's purpose and a brief exploration of the reasons why this study was conducted. It includes a recap of such factors as culture,

family, school, and society that influence the educational decisions of Appalachian male high school students. Reasons why completing a high school education is important were presented as well as data on the dropout problem in the United States and in the geographical area that was the present study's focus.

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of a specific group of individuals; that is, Appalachian males who dropped out of school and then returned to school and successfully completed high school. I believed it was important to identify factors that motivated these young men to return to school as this information could provide approaches, such as modeling, to aid the success of other young men. The research questions presented in Chapter 1 reflected this focus. The key theoretical/conceptual frameworks (Gardner, Bandura, and Vygotsky) were presented as well as the nature of the study, definitions of key concepts, and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 2 presents the literature that was reviewed to inform the basis and premise for the present study. Study methodology is detailed and discussed in Chapter 3, results are presented in Chapter 4, and a discussion of results as well as recommendations for practice and further research are presented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The dropout rate for male high school students is high, and, specific to the focus of the present study, the dropout rate among Appalachian male students is extremely high, with 30% of all individuals age 17 years and over not possessing a high school diploma or GED certificate (Kids Count Data Center, 2011). However, some individuals from the Appalachian area have returned to school and successfully completed their education. The purpose of the present study was to research and capture the lived experiences of students who dropped out of school and their motivation for returning to school and completing their education. Specific to the proposed study and target population was the identification of if and how exposure to music education might have influenced the perceptions of self-efficacy in these individuals and aided their return to school and successful completion of the coursework leading to a high school diploma or GED.

This chapter is a review of current literature that has addressed the present study's key constructs. I discuss main areas that have been addressed in the existing literature. These factors can influence or impede the successful completion of formal education and include culture (Gore & Wilburn, 2010), family influences (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2009; Lahm, 2009), socioeconomic status (Hortz, Stevens, Holden, & Petosa (2009), learning styles (Gardner, 1983, 1993), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986). I conclude with a discussion of music, the arts, and education.

The review of literature demonstrates a clear gap regarding the present study's focus and the need for additional research. A greater understanding is essential for the well-being of similar populations. In general, ways to decrease high school dropout rates and increase high school graduation rates need to be explored. I believed that learning more about the identified population would contribute to finding these ways.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted a literature review for articles relevant to the proposed study using the following databases: Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, Science Direct, Human Services, Thoreau: Search Multiple, Sage Full Text Collection, and Walden Dissertations, Education. The key search terms used were *youth offender, multicultural education, culture influences, art intervention, learning disabilities, self-efficacy,* and *juvenile delinquency*. As I processed the research, I discovered further areas of interest, which were added to give additional perspectives, including *music intervention, art and drama, multiple intelligences, learning styles,* and *cognitive characteristics*.

Many influences affect students' views about the importance of education. I chose to organize this literature by discussing these influences first. This is followed by a discussion of the key theories of learning and self-efficacy informing this study. I conclude with a discussion of how music has been influential in high school student decisions about their educational future.

General Cultural Influences on Learning

Culture can be defined as behaviors, idioms, and traditions passed from one generation to the next (Keller, 2011). Cultural factors can influence educational goals.

Cultural content can influence self-concept and how one views oneself (Rübeling et al., 2010). Individuals who come from cultures that value independence are self-contained, competitive, and value their own opinions (Cowdery, 2010), whereas in other cultures that do not value independence as highly, individuals who are interdependent may not have the self-confidence to be self-motivated and are less centered on their uniqueness.

Cultural exposures help shape human development. Psychological aspects of the cultural context are also influential. Cowdery (2010) postulated that, logically, all humans are multicultural. Cultural aspects can include where one lives, religion, gender, social class, and the arts, including music.

Family Culture

Family cultures transmit values from one generation to the next. Seeking family approval often means embodiment of the family's social culture (Gore & Wilburn, 2010). Learners' physiological pathways can be influenced by their family cultures and social skills based on their reactions to collectivistic rather than individualistic intellectual development (Keller, 2011).

Education can become both a tradition and an aspect of a family's culture. Education is a key component of social progress but may not be esteemed in the family culture. Historically, in Appalachian culture, having a job has been more important than having an education (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2009). Financial security could be the goal. While a student's goal is to please the family, having a good job meets with family approval. Gore and Wilburn (2010) supported that finances could be considered part of a family's culture.

The Increasing Influence of Grandparents

Intergenerational families are becoming more common, with extended family members becoming more involved in children's lives. Some households have a history of as many as seven generations that have lived in the same house. Bigbee, Musil, and Kenski (2011) noted that 38% of grandmothers were the primary caregivers in Appalachian rural areas. When parents are not part of the family, seeking grandparents' approval and support can become essential. Grandparents share their social values and cultural perspectives, which can influence their grandchildren conceptually (Keller, 2011). Students' personal goals and thoughts may not be supported because they do not match their grandparents' concepts and values.

Keller (2011) noted the role of culture and its influence in the human cognitive process. For many years, it was believed that all humans were the same when it came to their perceptive processing (Keller, 2011). Vygotsky's (1978) research supports that cognitive functioning is influenced by cultural factors. Students being raised by an older generation are presented with particular challenges. Often the grandparent's cognitive awareness does not address the concerns that contemporary generations face (Keller, 2011). Concerns, issues, and educational demands change with each generation.

Such concerns are seen in the number of grandparents being the significant caregivers, which has been dramatic since the early 1990s. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (2010) showed that 2.4 million grandparents are responsible for taking care of their grandchildren and their homes. The trend of more grandparents taking care of their grandchildren in their parents' absence is also evidenced

in Ohio. According to Bigbee et al. (2011), the number of custodial grandparents in Ohio

has increased since 2008. The parents of the children who have custodial

grandparents may be incarcerated or have mental illnesses, including substance

abuse. Therefore, they are unable to take care of their children.

A major concern regarding caregiving grandparents includes staying healthy long

enough to see their grandchildren reach the age of 18 years (Musil, Warner,

Zauszniewski, Wykle, & Standing, 2009). The demands placed on grandparents while

caring for their grandchildren can reduce time for the grandparents' self-care.

Researchers have found that depression and obesity in grandparents have increased after

grandchildren moved in (Musil et al., 2009). Musil et al. (2009) compared noncustodial

grandparents to custodial grandparents and found that custodial grandparents had higher

rates of depression, anxiety, diabetes, and other health issues that could limit participation

in the activities of their young grandchildren. Without continuous support from custodial

grandparents, student goals could be adversely affected.

Limited income could be another factor affecting custodial grandparents' support.

Grandparents living in rural areas generally have lower incomes and their poverty levels

are higher (Musil et al., 2009). Musil et al. also found that the demands of raising

children diminished self-efficacy in custodial grandparents.

Socioeconomic Status

Poverty can directly affect students' educational opportunities as students with

limited resources have fewer experiential prospects. Hortz et al. (2009) identified

several factors that interfered in equal opportunity education among Appalachian students

in Ohio, including the unavailability of after-school transportation, which results in nonparticipation in extracurricular activities such as music and sports. Toivanen, Komulainen, and Ruismaki (2011) indicated that giving students the opportunity to participate in after-school activities could increase their self-image and self-value and help them feel more confident about their ability to learn.

Family income can be another influential factor in attaining education (Toivanen et al., 2011). Many Appalachian students are expected to begin working while in high school (Hortz et al., 2009). Results from Toivanen et al.'s study, conducted in 11 counties in southeastern Ohio, showed that 51% of 12th graders held after-school jobs.

The educational disadvantages related to lower socioeconomic status start before children enter school. According to Ohmer et al. (2010), drugs, juvenile delinquency, and homicide are common in lower-income neighborhoods. Ohmer et al. examined the norms and values that exist among lower socioeconomic groups. These norms and values include certain street behaviors such as gang wars, foul language, and assault. Even though children may not agree with what they see others do, they may conform because of peer pressure (Ohmer et al., 2010). These factors affect self-motivation and self-efficacy in young people.

There is a need for youth to see models of how one can get out of the neighborhood and be successful (Ohmer et al., 2010). Role models and mentors can provide companionship and help based on their experience. Young people who are mentored are 52% less likely to drop out of learning programs (Ohmer et al., 2010). Rodriguez-Planas (2012) discussed an intervention focused on disadvantaged

youth with low socioeconomic backgrounds, detailing three factors that can increase high school completion: mentoring, educational services, and financial incentives. Rodriguez-Planas concluded that academic failure is not just due to the lack of cognitive skills but also noncognitive skills. Family social status can be a barrier that interferes with self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance to succeed educationally. Lack of parental support can psychologically compromise students' beliefs about their self-efficacy (Garrin, 2013). Becoming acquainted with a successful person can help young people strive for opportunity.

Social Class Influences on Learning

The factors of social class and expected outcomes can influence a child's education. Hempel-Jorgensen (2009) stated that social class could influence the learner's outcome and psychological thinking. How students see others as learners can influence how they view themselves as learners (Gore & Wilburn, 2010). Their achievement level can be based on the expectancy level they have formed based on their cultural and academic values.

Keller (2011) observed that there are differences in the rearing of children that are systemic to the outcome of cognitive behavior. It has been assumed that normal human beings had the same sets of memory, learning, and perceptual developmental stages (Wadsworth, 1975). Researchers have found that the role that culture plays in cognitive development influences achievement (Vygotsky, 1978). In educationally structured homes where the parents and grandparents are educated, the expectation is that the children will also become educated. Culture plays a unique role in the sociocognitive

achievements of children based on their particular environmental exposures (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's (1978) research supports that the processes of learning and development are not congruent. Students having the same learning experience can move cognitively and developmentally in different stages. Cultural exposure can change the perception of information given (Keller, 2011). Therefore, the developmental process can be slower or faster for the learner because of the relevant connection of the information given. The emergence or recognition of children's developmental processes can be influenced by their intellectual and sociocultural competencies.

Bruner (1996) stressed the role that culture and environment play in the development of cognition. Intelligence is defined by social skills and social responsibilities in African and Asian cultures. Expectancies are measured within social status. Within the content of acceptability, there is an increased awareness of the relationship of cognition and environmental context (Bruner, 1996). To gain a different social status would be would unacceptable. As an example, for individuals who were raised in a farming community, the expectancy would be to carry on the farming tradition. This can limit their personal self-value and dreams.

Rübeling et al.'s (2010) studies supported that children's drawings reveal differences in social class influences on self-value and self-awareness. The early drawings from German children showed them using up as much space as their families. The drawings of Nso farmer children showed themselves much smaller when compared with the space used up for their family in their drawings (Rübeling et al., 2010). This

comparison shows the value and placement of the children's perception of themselves in the family structure. Without self-value, the confidence to learn is diminished.

Garrin's (2013) research, which resulted in the triadic model of self-efficacy, attribution, and appraisal, supports transforming cultural/social perceptions of students through enhancing their self-efficacy beliefs. Garrin emphasized the connection between self-efficacy, attribution, and appraisal providing the stimuli for approaching challenges. With developmental initiatives, students can reach beyond social class limitations by realizing their competency and undertaking challenges (Brigman, Campbell, & Webb, 2010; Brigman & Webb, 2010). These factors can facilitate a student learning how to affect social change.

Physical Activity

Researchers have linked physical activity to intelligence. Hortz et al. (2009), in their study of rates of physical activity among Appalachian adolescents in Ohio, proposed that there is a relationship between physical activity and cognitive intelligence. Creativity can be expressed through flexibility and readiness to learn. Rest and play influence cognitive awareness. Obesity or inactivity can be inhibitors to cognitive progression and can be associated with low self-esteem. Derri, Emmanouilidou, Vassiliadou, Tzetzis, and Kioumourtzoglou (2008) researched the relationship between academic learning time in physical education and the acquisition and retention of skill concepts. Their findings support that cognitive skills development depends on motor development increasing intellectual abilities. There is a specific cognitive interrelation between processing time and physical movement (Derri et al., 2008). The results of Derri et al.'s study showed that

psychomotor wiring is effective in enhancing cognitive skills. Cognition and motor skills are similar in acquiring information, storing it, and then being able to recall it when needed. This has similarities to motor skill learning or muscle memory. It incorporates higher thought processes, which are needed for voluntary movement.

Cognition is described as the capacity to infuse information. Physical movement can enhance cognitive development according to Derri et al. (2008). Opitz (2011) stated that a reduction of motor performance can lead to a decrease in cognitive conceptual learning. Only 5% of adolescents in the Appalachian region are meeting daily recommendations for physical activity (Hortz et al., 2009). Barnhouse, Zolotor, and Stulberg (2010) found that health risks are a consequence of highly sedentary behavior and can lead to low self-esteem and self-value along with depression and anxiety.

Educational Exposure at Home and at School

There is value in creating balance for children's development and opportunity. Educational reinforcement at home should be congruent with educational reinforcement at school (van Lier, 2014). Having a home environment that supports education and that includes learning opportunities can support activities at school. Researchers have shown that helping students with homework helps their achievement in school. One of the strong emphases of NCLB (Klein, 2010) was on reading readiness, especially among the youngest children, which can be reinforced by parents or caregivers helping their children at home.

Teacher/Student Influences

Relationships between teachers and students can influence learning. Leibowitz (2009) took a close look at the internal framework of the relationship between students and teachers and found that their respective backgrounds involve the influence of their social, economic, and cultural experiences. Leibowitz researched teachers' expectancies and how they affect learner motivation. She noted a need for sensitivity, by the teacher, to identify the learner's capability and concerns. This information could help determine what distracts learners from their focus of study.

Sadowski (2013) supported the belief that taking time to listen increases students' self-value. Students are able to voice their emotional challenges through a listening ear. Establishing a teacher/mentor relationship can encourage students to have reasons to finish school. The teacher becomes a mentor to trust, and students are able to find themselves through the process of self-evaluation (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010). Sadowski concluded that students whose safety are at risk and are targeted can develop strong foundations of resilience. The power of the relationship between teacher/mentor will help them become successful and overcome their risk.

Being At Risk

At-risk students have additional concerns that need to be addressed. Researchers have defined at-risk youth as young people whose background places them at risk of not having success in their school and educational experiences (Haag, 2010). Haag (2010) studied results of Structure of Intelligence Tests–Revised administered to 247 youth who were in a juvenile justice system in a rural county in the western United States. He found

that these youth had identifiable cognitive characteristics and learning styles that included

high creativity and poor processing and reasoning skills. They also preferred to receive

information that was symbolically presented as simply as possible (Haag, 2010). If the

creative learning style is a forte in youth at risk, then creative communication could also

be a way to better connect them to their learning experiences.

Some research has shown that at-risk youth had outcomes that are more

successful when they were enrolled in career exploration programs (Haag, 2010).

Programs with an educational focus on career development were found to be successful

in building skills, self-awareness, and self-value. Haag (2010) discussed one study that

included pretest and posttest measures and tracked such data as date of birth, ethnicity,

special educational eligibility, and goals. Ten survey questions were administered to

study participants to document their behavior during the program as well as their attitudes

and outcomes. When students started to identify their issues and how to work through

them, they became more goal oriented (Haag, 2010). Moody, Kruse, Nagel, and Conlon

(2008) found that students who participated in career exploration programs were more

likely to graduate from high school and that educational attainment was a key factor in

reducing recidivism. They also found that career development was a crucial element of

the educational process as students prepared to enter the labor market (Moody et al.,

2008).

Disabilities

Looking toward the future for any young person can be overwhelming. Having a disability can present even more challenges. Whether it is vocational or higher education, everyone should be given a choice for the future.

Statistics shows about 43% of Blacks and 48% of Latino students with special needs do not receive diplomas on time (Robick, 2010). As compared to the other students, the dropout rate for students with disabilities is twice as high (Robick, 2010). Though systems have been provided to improvement these challenges, there are still gaps in the educational programs that help special needs students have successful educational outcomes. There is a need for identifying the self-help and self-motivational models that will have positive effects on students. One of the critical components of student success is the student being motivated to be successful. Using self-advocacy, as a student with special needs, improves awareness of assistance available (Ankeny, Wilkins, & Spain, 2009). The Pennsylvania State Performance Plan, which addresses the state's special education program through the state's Office of Special Education Programs, improved 100%, through their transition process with the compliance rate in the year 2010 (Robick, 2010). Office of Special Education Programs discovered that the success of students with special needs depends on the parent or guardian's involvement. These improvements helped motivation and increased self-esteem in students with special needs. Participants were strengthened thorough this program PSPP, serving youth and families, is helping to build the confidence and self-esteem needed, for successful special need students,

graduating and pursuing vocational or higher education (Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010).

Educational Interruptions

Time spent away from school can affect educational outcomes. There is a connection between 49% of high school dropouts and school suspensions (Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Piquero, & Berk, 2011). Suspension from school has not been proven an effective tool for changing behavior. Hirschfield (2009) showed that in Chicago, out of a sample of 4,844 inner city students, 3.5% were more likely to drop out in grades 9 and 10 after having been suspended from school. Without encouragement, reasoning, and modeling, the motivation to try harder and finish school may not be present.

There is a need to identify self-help and self-motivational models that will have positive effects on students. One of the critical components of student successfulness is the student being motivated to be successful. Youth who have records are challenged when trying to reenter school (Abrams & Snyder, 2010). Youth who have been incarcerated returned more readily to school when they have experienced a higher level of educational achievement (Blomberg et al., 2011). Researchers have found that a number of education-related disabilities are historically associated with underachievers who are serious offenders (Payne, Gottfredson, & Kruttschnitt, 2009).

The influence of neighborhood patterns such as alcohol, drugs, and violence may weaken juveniles' ability to reenter society after incarceration (Payne et al., 2009). These disadvantages contribute to the low rate of youth who have been incarcerated obtaining

their GED or high school diploma (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). These interruptions in their education tend to lower their self-esteem and self-value.

Theories of Learning and Self-Efficacy

There are a number of theories on learning and self-efficacy. The following is a discussion of the key theories that informed the present study.

Ayyal Awwad's (2013) article on Piaget explores Piaget's theory on learning in depth. According to Ayyal Awwad, Piaget's theory is one of the learning theories that explain the learning process. There are three aspects of intelligent growth according to Piaget: construction, content, and function. As a child develops, construction and content change but function remains the same. The regulation and adaptation process creates a series of stages, with each stage providing psychological structures that will determine the student's thinking capacity (Ayyal Awwad, 2013). Piaget believed that each human being learns as a process and observed his own children to develop his theory on the stages of learning: the sensory stage, from birth to 2 years of age, the preoperational stage, from 2–7 years, the concrete operational stage from 7–11 years, and the formal operational stage 11 years to adulthood (Wadsworth, 1975). Piaget concluded, based on his progressive cognitive growth theory, that students need to learn self-discovery methods so that these experiences are effective.

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Parents at home and teachers at school play a fundamental role in a child's cognitive structure and provide a framework for the child's progress (McKenzie, 2012).

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences supports that influences at home and school are pivotal to a child's intellectual development.

Gardner (1993) held that there are eight different abilities or intelligences that one could possess: music-rhythmic, spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Gardner further theorized that intelligence could be categorized into three primary or overarching categories: being able to create an effective product or offer a service that a culture values, possessing a set of problem-solving skills, and being able to find or create solutions for problems by gathering new information or knowledge (Gardner, 2000a).

As previously noted, Gardner supported music as being part of human intelligence, which helps justify students being exposed to music education. Gardner further believed that each child is born with his or her own special intelligence and that being exposed to music education can uncover other intelligences. In an in-depth article, specifically on the concept of musical intelligence (Helding, 2010) stated that music is closely linked to Gardner's other intelligences. Helding (2010) noted, as examples, that musicians use the cortex, on the left side of the brain and which is associated with math skills when notating music. Interpersonal intelligence is used when musicians play in groups and feel connected with other musicians. Interpersonal intelligence also plays a role in musicians managing their health and profession.

Helding (2010) further noted that on a biological level, the personal intelligences revealed music's importance to us as humans. Many cognitive scientists agree that music is a biological enigma, which has caused some to equate music's importance to human

life. It is so central that Gardner's claim "if we can explain music, we can find the key to all human thought is not implausible, at least from a biological point of view (Helding, 2010, p.324). On a broader, more philosophical level, many scientists agree with Gardner's caveat that "failure to take music seriously weakens any account of the human condition" (Helding, 2010, p. 329). Finding other ways in which students can develop different learning strategies is transferable to other areas of education (Baer, 2010).

Vygotsky's Developmental Constructivism Theory

Vygotsky's (1896/1934) ZPD measures potential learning ability. According to Vygotsky (1978), the ZPD is the difference between a child's "actual development as determined by independent problem solving" and the higher level of "potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In the ZPD, the educational developmental processing of scaffolding, where social support is provided, is where learning tales place. Vygotsky defined the differences between developmental levels. Children's ability to independently solve problems and the level of their potential development of problem-solving are determined with adult guidance and modeling.

Children who have less cultural and social support may need extra stimuli at school and extra-individualized attention to create their greatest potential. Vygotsky (1896/1934) proposed that the cultural and social influences from the family come to the learner first, followed by development at school.

The lack of congruency of educational guidance, collaboration, and support from home is one of the major gaps seen in Appalachian children's learning development.

There is a need to undergird the child's confidence of learning ability when confronted with tasks at school. These factors can affect children's ability to work consistently at school because they lack self-confidence and self-value due to the lack of educational reinforcement at home.

Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy

Realizing one's intelligence can also be accomplished thorough self-efficacy. Self-discovery enables students to achieve balance. Students who believe they are competent have self-esteem. The theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) supports that one's belief in his or her ability is a direct outcome of one's performance. The environment does influence student development, but students can identify their own integral base through self-efficacy. Positive self-advocacy helps individuals set higher goals and be committed to these goals. When negative feedback comes, it can allow for a more optimistic view and response. Individuals are able to self-reflect and develop internal standards about their capabilities. These thoughts produce self-evaluation, which reflects self-efficacy (Garrin, 2013).

Music, Arts, and Education

Researchers have found that music, drama, and the arts can be used as conduits to learning, which has been underscored by such initiatives as Goals 2000: Educate America Act, federal legislation passed in 1994 that declared the arts as a core subject in American schools (Radu, 2012). In "Music in U.S. Federal Education Policy: Estimating the Effect of 'Core Status' for Music," Elpus (2013) discussed the impact of the legislation on U.S. high schools. He found correlations between designating the arts as a core subject and the

number of courses, course requirements, and number of years of courses that public schools required after the federal act was implemented (Gibbons, 2015). According to Gibbons (2015), Elpus contended that the effects of Goals 2000 should be assessed in the policy's larger concept, specifically the belief at the time that arts education, especially music, had other cognitive benefits. According to Koza (2010), based on research findings, there is no doubt that arts programs contribute to creative thinking and also to the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Barrett, Everett, and Smifiel's (2010) observational study revealed children's perceptions of the meaning and value of the arts and presented accounts of how they engaged in arts activities both in school and in youth arts settings. Children from age 5 years to age 18 years were studied, and Barrett et al. employed different approaches for accessing the children's perspectives based on their age. Techniques such as self-portraits and drawings were used (Barrett et al., 2010). Barrett et al. found that engaging children in the arts helps them hidden interests and skills. It also gave them another way of communicating with their family.

One promising intervention for at-risk youth has been participation in a unique fine arts program that has focused on developing purpose for these individuals in nontraditional ways. This program uses drumming. It was designed to engage Australian aboriginal youth because of their nonverbal skills. These youth were resistant to talk-based therapy. Success was found in using drumming as a way of communicating with the youth because of its familiarity in their culture (Faulkner, 2012).

Music has often been used as a communicative language throughout cultures. Drumming is a traditional practice that crosses many cultures worldwide. This therapeutic strategy can be a source of emotional support to troubled youth, giving a sense of identity (Hallam, 2009). One example of a drumming program is DRUMBEAT (Discovering Relationships Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes, and Thoughts), created by Faulkner (2012) to help instructors create individualized student programs as needed on a daily basis. DRUMBEAT is a research-based intervention for youth at risk, which has been found to be a strong source of emotional support (Faulkner, 2012). Initially, this program was designed to engage Australian Aborigines who had long resisted therapeutic talk-based programs. This music was used as a tool to connect with Australian Aboriginal youth (Faulkner, 2012). This musical source can be a support system to young people who might feel lonely. They can connect worldwide with drumming. With this sense of achievement and identity, they can also prepare to explore other areas of achievement in their life.

DRUMBEAT provides flexibility and facilitates working with participants of various cultural backgrounds, ages, and genders. Different cultures are recognized in the context of participants' developmental stages (Hallam, 2009). The outcomes reflect improvement in students' mood swings and social interaction. Drumming has also resulted in the reduction of antidepressant medicine and psychotic episodes, producing healthier and happier lives in the students (Rauscher, 2009).

Researchers have also found a direct correlation between developmental language disorder and rhythm and meter perception (Przybylski et al., 2013). More specifically, the

intervention of musical rhythms helps students improve language impairment and dyslexia. Research results have also supported greater improvement in students with specific language impairment compared with dyslexic students (Bos, 2012).

Research has also advanced the understanding of how music influences other activities of the brain. Engaging in different types of music may develop skills that are transferable without conscious awareness (Przybylski et al., 2013). The relationship between speech and music are processing systems that are shared. As such, musical influences on language could also affect students' ability to read (Hallam, 2010). Researchers have found that in 8 weeks of musical training students as young as 8 years old showed improvement in their perceptual cognition (Cotton, 2010).

At-risk youth in the DRUMBEAT receive peer and adult mentoring along with exposure to a participatory fine arts curriculum (Faulkner, 2012). This art program provides the flexibility to combine experimental learning with cognitive behavior therapy. Similar fine arts programs in other countries have contributed to evidence-based practice for at-risk youth (Faulkner, 2012). Research also supports the connection of fine arts to adolescent purpose and goals (Southgate & Roscigno, 2009; Travis & Bowman, 2011). The multidisciplinary perspective provides a unique, innovative approach. It demonstrates high potential for successful interventions for adolescents who have not responded to schools that are more traditional.

Music and art can help students communicate verbally and nonverbally (Hallam, 2010). The language of music can be used to implement strategies to improve academic achievement. Hallam (2010) proposed that technological studies of the brain have shown

that active engagement with music affects intellectual, social, and personal development in young people. Brain responses were measured during testing, showing the difference between novice musicians and trained musician, in their auditory processing. These findings differentiated the influences of musical skills and the brain processing. Vuust, Brattico, Seppanen, Naatanen and Tervaniemi's (2012) findings supported accelerated auditory skills in trained musicians because of their processing of pitch perception.

One example of how music can not only improve academic performance but shape one's life and help set a positive future course is the story of James Daugherty (Olson, 2009). Daugherty, the son of a bipolar mother who grew up in rural North Carolina, found safety in his middle school's band room. As he put it, music became his family (Olson, 2009). The lack of sustainable support in his culture at home was mitigated through his musical communicative skills. Music became a culture where Daugherty learned to accentuate the positive in his life (Olson, 2009). Today, Daugherty himself is a band director.

Research has also advanced the understanding of how music influences other activities of the brain. Engaging in different types of music may develop skills that are transferable without conscious awareness (Przybylski et al., 2013). The relationship between speech and music are processing systems that are shared. Musical influences on language could also affect students' ability to read (Hallam, 2010). Researchers have found that within 8 weeks of musical training, students as young as 8 years of age showed improvement in their perceptual cognition.

The Value of Drama in Education

Researchers have found that the arts play a key role in developing social awareness, self-awareness, and self-efficacy, and that with at-risk youth, early intervention using the arts has been effective. Drama is an art form that increases social awareness (Bowell & Heap, 2010). The educational strategy of drama teaches stage and self-awareness. It affords the opportunity to match levels of experience and expectations of the curriculum (Bowell & Heap, 2010).

Carroll (2009) found that drama could encourage safe behavior and promote compassionate interactions. Drama can be considered a creative approach to teaching. There is a sense of artistic creation that exists between the student performer and the teacher director (Bowell & Heap, 2010). This collaborative process weaves together listening responsiveness, movement stillness, and spontaneous implementation within a contained timeframe.

Caroll (2009) referred to the "mantle of expression" as a systematic promotion of teacher learning experience where they construct and deconstruct through the drama process. This teacher/learner experience involves both the actor and the director. This is a collaborative effort between the actor and director becoming creative. This drama experience evokes the willingness of both parties to apply knowledge attained. Results support immediate responses and clarification and positive outcomes.

Exposure to drama has been shown to increase the development of social skills and knowledge (Bowell & Heap, 2010). These attributes can lead to self-confidence and

increase the participants' ability to perform theatrical tasks. These collective skills enhanced social awareness and self-expression (Bowell & Heap, 2010).

Drama allows creating skills through exploring different characters. Toivanen et al. (2011) found that mastering interactive and creative skills can be accomplished through drama. This approach allows teachers to move from scripted teaching to developing educational programs. Scripted teaching can be framed as instructionism. Creative educational programming poles for more cognitive deeper meaning, preparing students to synthesize their knowledge. The use of drama and education increases spontaneity, physical movement, and cognition.

Programs like the Bellevue Youth Theater help students gain self-awareness. BYT is the one of the free youth performing arts program available in the United States (Bos, 2012). Their mission is to facilitate acting opportunities for students, particularly these dealing with dyslexia and depression (Bos, 2012). These students have incredible confident boosters throughout this theater experience. Students who were once shy, would not speak up in class, and tried their best to be invisible now exert self-esteem and know that they have a voice (Bos, 2012).

Summary

Throughout this review of the literature, I explored different influences on learning. The literature points to culture, family, and education as influences (Gardner, 1983, 1993; Vygotsky, 1896/1934; Wadsworth, 1975). These influences affect the self-confidence and self-motivation (Bandura, 1986, Garrin, 2013) students need to complete their high school education. Socioeconomic factors can also result in educational

disadvantages (Ohmer et al., 2010) before students enter school. At-risk students need additional support (Haag, 2010) to have an equal opportunity of attaining a quality education.

Research results have shown that exposure to music and arts curriculum has positive influences (Cotton, 2010) on educational outcomes. Music and arts curricula proved to be an important stimulus for improving self-esteem and self-value, thus raising self-efficacy (Garrin, 2013). Through this investigation, it can be seen that each theorist's perspectives (Bandura, 1986; Gardner, 1983, 1993; Piaget, as cited in Wadsworth, 1975; Vygotsky, 1896/1934) supported that exposure to music education would produce greater educational outcomes. As identified in the literature review, the integration of arts into education raises self-esteem and changes student's belief systems about what they can attain educationally (Cotton, 2013).

The educational system has been the organism that has defined our intelligence. Intelligences exist in many areas (Gardner, 1993). According to Gardner (1993), children's value has been labeled in terms of whether they are intelligent or not intelligent. This assertion is a myopic view of how intelligence is to be measured, and it does not place value on a student's individual forte (Hallam, 2009). Instead, judgment is solely placed on ability to regurgitate data for test taking. Recognizing and implementing how students perceive information, intuitively or through the senses, is the beginning of how success in education can be achieved (Gardner, 1991).

It was hoped that conducting the present study would find evidence of the influences that motivate Appalachian males to return to high school and complete their

education. I explored the different perspectives of the participants on accountability of the educational system. Based on the reflective experiences, attitudes, beliefs and feelings of these Appalachian young men, the education system did not motivate them enough to finish school. In Chapter 3, the methods used to conduct the present study are presented. It was hoped that conducting the present study would reveal what influenced and motivated Appalachian males to return to high school and complete the coursework necessary to receive a high school diploma or GED.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The focus of the present study was an exploration of the experiences of male Appalachian high school students between ages 18–22 years who dropped out of high school and subsequently decided to return to school and finish the coursework necessary to receive a high school diploma or GED. The inquiry centered on their perceptions of their cultural, social, economic, educational, and musical influences and specifically on how exposure to music or musical education might have played a role in their decision to return to school and complete the necessary coursework.

This chapter details the research method I chose for this study. I present the rationale for selecting this approach as well as detail on the following: overall study methodology, selection of study participants, my role as the researcher, ethical considerations, and a description of the components of the methodology for this study. In addition, I explain how the exploratory questionnaire was prepared and how I planned to administer it. Lastly, I discuss the tools for data collection and analysis as well as possible threats to data quality.

Research Design and Rationale

Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences projects the prospect of individualistic learning. Music is one of the multiple intelligences outlined in Gardner's theory. Study participants' exposure to music education was explored as an influence that might support changing self-efficacy, adding value to the participant's future. I

investigated how music, used as a conduit for character building, may have influenced educational goals.

The following research questions formed the basis of the present study:

RQ: What are the lived experiences of male high school dropout's ages 18–22 years regarding their decision to return to school to complete the coursework necessary for receiving a high school diploma or GED?

RQ: What role might music have played in the decision to return to school to complete the necessary coursework?

Qualitative research can reflect various approaches (Creswell, 2013). After reviewing numerous approaches, I determined that phenomenology, specifically hermeneutical phenomenology, would be best. I believed that the answers to the questions I developed for the present study would best be gleaned from the individuals who were the focus of this study and what they had to say about their experiences (van Manen, 2013).

Phenomenology allows for investigating the reflections of the experience as the participants lived it rather than investigating the concepts that derive from the experience (Moustakas, 1994). According to Ferrarello (2014), phenomenological research design involves an in-depth inquiry to better understand lived human experiences as study participants describe and report them. Van Manen (2013) described phenomenological research as revealing such rich experiences that the readers themselves can also have a lived experience.

Phenomenological inquiry typically takes one of two approaches: hermeneutic phenomenology, or empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Hermeneutical phenomenology is oriented toward lived experiences and interpreting the *texts* (hermeneutics) of life (van Manen, 1990). According to van Manen (1990), the science of hermeneutics helps communicate the phenomena of the reflective experiences and contextualize that communication. Then, through the researcher's comprehensive knowledge and comprehension, the exploration of the participants' experience can be given meaning. According to van Manen (1990), researchers first identify a phenomenon or an abiding concern that interests them. They then reflect on essential themes of what constitute the nature of this lived experience and then write a description of the phenomenon.

The goal of this study was to capture the textured expression of the relived and reflective experience of the high school dropout returning to school. Hermeneutics researches human studies and seeks to understand the experience of the participant by adding meaning from different perspective lenses (Moustakas, 1994). Since the primary goal of this study was to explore the lived experiences of male Appalachians who dropped out of high school and the factors that were influential in their decision to return to school and graduate, a hermeneutical phenomenological approach was deemed most appropriate.

Role of the Researcher

According to Creswell (2013), in qualitative research the researcher is the key instrument for data collection through such approaches as examining documents,

observing behavior, and interviewing participants. While qualitative researchers might use an instrument, it is one of their own design and employs open-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Further, according to Dean (2007), qualitative researchers are ethically bound to purposefully and thoughtfully engage participants in a process that reflects a relationship based on respect and sensitivity to the phenomenon of interest. This includes addressing any possible areas of personal bias.

I was the principal researcher in this study. I have been a music educator and have been involved in education for over 40 years, primarily on collegiate levels and in a private music studio. As such, I would have presented any potentially biased influences on the participants. My goal as principal researcher was to respect each participant's opinion (Dean, 2007). Any biases, thoughts, or suggestions I might have had were set aside. My focus was on bracketing my feelings and my perception of these events. As a professional musician, I attempted to disconnect my experience with the participants' experiences and how music may have influenced their educational levels. I made a conscious effort not to intersubject the participant experience by leading the questions (Husserl, 2002).

Methodology

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). According to van Manen (1990), the goal of phenomenological research is to develop a rich or dense description of the phenomenon being investigated in a particular context. Given this, a purposeful selection method was chosen in keeping with recommendations by several

authors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, Patton, 2002) for this type of research and in order to select information-rich cases for detailed study. In this case, they had to be participants who could shed light on what motivated them to go back to school and if music had played a role in that decision.

A purposive sample of seven males 18–22 years of age was sought for the present study. Criterion sampling, which means that all cases meet certain criterion, was used (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). This also helped ensure the quality of this study. Inclusion criteria included area of residence (county), having been a high school dropout and then having returned to school to complete the requirements for a high school diploma or GED, and participation in some sort of music education.

Participants were adult men recruited from the Appalachians area, specifically from TRiO-Student Support Services at Zane State College in Zanesville, Ohio and the Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) program in the following Ohio counties: Belmont, Harrison, Morgan, Noble, Guernsey, Monroe, Muskingum, and Washington. There are 12 different program sites in these counties. Adults attending programs at these sites are seeking their GED to further their job careers or educational goals. Potential participants were recruited via flyers that were distributed through email and posted at the Zanesville campus of the Mid-East Career and Technological Centers and through word of mouth. Potential participants were asked brief questions to determine if they qualified for the study.

According to Mason and Ide (2014) and Hunter, Corcoran, Leeder, and Phelps (2013), a number of issues can affect sample size in qualitative research, but saturation

should be the guiding principle. Mason and Ide further noted that samples for qualitative

studies are typically much smaller than those for quantitative studies for the following

reasons: There is a point of diminishing return to a qualitative sample (as the study goes

on, more data does not necessarily lead to more information), and frequencies are rarely

important in qualitative research as qualitative research is concerned with meaning and

not making generalized hypothetical statements. In addition, since qualitative research is

labor intensive, analyzing a large sample can be time consuming and simply impractical.

As such, I deemed a sample of seven young men appropriate for this study, as I believed

that obtaining data from a larger sample would not necessarily lead to new information. If

data saturation did not happen; that is, if I did not see patterns emerging from the

interviews or if the responses were too varied, I would have recruited additional

participants using the same approaches previously employed.

Instrumentation

In keeping with the phenomenological approach, I collected data using open-

ended questions during conversational, one-on-one interviews (van Manen (1990).

Because of the intensity of the interview, the information collected provided contents of

the thoughts and feelings experienced by the interviewee (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The

interviews were built around two main components: (a) in-depth conversation in order to

achieve a more meaningful understanding of the interviewee's viewpoints, and (b) the

interviewee and interviewer becoming research partners rather than a question and

answer examination (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These notes were also used to provide

further layering of in-depth questioning if another interview was needed for clarity.

Interviewing can become a meaningful tool as the two parties partner in this experience. During the interview process, participants were free to interject questions about the study. They were told that there are no wrong or right answers. They were also free to express their feelings, thoughts, and attitudes regarding the questions they were asked.

Interviews were digitally audio recorded to help analyze and validate the data collected. This also helped secure any biases specific to interpretation by me as the interviewer. I interpreted the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and emotions experienced by the participants that influenced their decisions to finish their high school education (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to each interview, I provided a detailed consent form, as approved by Walden University's institutional review board IRB.

The opening questions allowed me to become acquainted with interviewees and likewise allowed them to become acquainted with me. My goal was to assure the participants that they were valuable to this project and that their input expressing their thoughts, feelings, and experience was very important. To ensure freedom from distractions, all interviews were conducted in private and secure locations to maintain confidentiality. This enabled participants to speak freely without the threat of being overheard. There were several options available for locations of the interviews: John McIntire Library, Zane State College, or my office at Cass Mind Academy, in Zanesville, Ohio. Before the beginning of the interview, the room was checked for a comfortable

temperature. Water and facial tissues and any other comfort items that might keep the interviewees relaxed were provided.

All participants were asked the following questions: What has your experience been regarding your decision to return to high school to complete your degree? What role might music have played in this decision? These interview questions were designed to derive a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and explore the deeper meaning of how they related to the phenomenon of returning to school (Moustakas, 1994).

When necessary, the probing technique as described by Rubin and Rubin (2005) was implemented to get a deeper insight and clarification from the first set of questions. This probing technique is used to extend answers by asking the interviewee to provide more clarification of meaning and examples to support their answers. Probing questions included the following:

- What was different about your returning to school knowing that you had failed before?
- Where there any musical experiences related to your returning to school?
- How has this lived experience of educational exposure to music influenced you?
- Has having this musical experience changed the way you view yourself?

As the researcher, I kept a level of sensitivity by observing the interviewees' body language and allowing time for emotional moments. I offered breaks to have a drink of water and to just relax and breathe deeply. Near the end of the interview, I explained to

interviewees that the interview was not binding and that they could discontinue their

participation at any time if they wished. I also advised them that if they would like to

change any part of their responses made earlier in the interview, they had the freedom to

do so.

Data Analysis Strategy

Using the data collected from the interviews, stories, and notes, I analyzed and

explored themes and patterns. Using a digital recorder during the interviews allowed me

to repeatedly review my audio data. I transcribed the data into a written format. As

described by Shank (2006), the difference between self-transcription and using a

transcriber is that the process of self-transcition can provide the researcher with new

insights and perspectives. Stake (2010) contended that there are differences between oral

and written language and its context. Therefore, transcriptions become crucial for

accuracy. Filtering out components of cultural significations while translating data

captures its meaningfulness (Stake, 2010). Self-transcription gave me an opportunity to

reflect on the content separate from the emotional effects of participating in the interview.

The phenomenological approach for this interview was not be based on the philosophical,

which focuses on cognition, but more on the hermeneutical interpretive emotions and

feelings expressed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) through the experience of music education.

Van Manen (2013) stated that the goal of the hermeneutic phenomenological

process is to capture the integrity of the descriptions of events provided by participants.

Accurately translating the meaning of the data gathered is another goal (Stake, 2010).

Van Manen discussed using the alignment of data to connecting meaning as opposed to

using the data to predetermine or define terms. To discover the meaning, the data need to be analyzed to distinguish the phenomenon from the participants' reflective experiences. The identification of being provides the base of the structural hermeneutical reflections. According to van Manen, identifying themes is more than just numbering the duplication of concepts or phrases as they occur in the data. Van Manen further clarified that outlining themes or capturing the meaning of statements identifies the principal or salient parts of the data. Identifying these themes constructs a deeper understanding that clarifies of the phenomena. I used the highlighting approach to identify phrases and ideas that stood out as themes. I organized these themes by summarizing the data from the content that the participants provided.

Data Quality and Issues of Trustworthiness

Data gathered were reviewed several times to confirm consistency, which created reliability. Trustworthiness of the data emerged through my goal of consistently emphasizing the subject matter during the interviews (Gabrielsen, Lindström, & Nåden, 2013). An audit trail was added to increase dependability. As the researcher, I recorded step-by-step developmental findings (Halpern, 1983; Lincoln, 1986). The transcribed data were reviewed several times to avoid mistakes that may have occurred during the transcription (Creswell, 2013). Another validating process for ruling out misinterpretation is using Guba and Lincoln's (1988) member check. A research team of students studying for their doctorates was used to analyze the data collected.

Study participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts upon completion. These notes were also used to provide further layering of in-depth questioning if another

interview was needed for clarity to add any information for clarification and validation. There were no changes integrated into the final transcription. After data analysis by the research team was complete, and as a means of member checking, I asked participants if they wished to review and confirm my interpretations and conclusions. This gave the interviewees the opportunity to respond in case they had misinterpreted any of the questions. The research team helped identify any of my biases that may have occurred during the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations include confidentiality and data protection for participants. The first objective was to protect the participant from harmful disclosure. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym, and I obtained written consent from each prior to beginning the interviews. I also obtained approval from Walden University's IRB before contacting potential participants. Potential participants were offered an honorarium of a $20 gift card if they were accepted for the study. The consent form explained confidentiality and the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time. All study records will be kept private under lock and key for 6 years. After this, they will be destroyed.

I ensured that there was no personal gain or expectation from a specific population. Participants' cultural diversity was treated with the highest respect and regard. Sensitivity was employed at all times. Appropriate language and communications were used at all times.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented the present study's research approach, including the design, sampling strategy, data collection, and analysis. I also discussed my role as the researcher, how bias was addressed, and ethical considerations including participant confidentiality and protection. In the following chapters, I present study findings and results and present recommendations for application and further research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of the present phenomenological study was to capture the attitudes, thoughts, and feelings of Appalachian males who dropped out of school and returned to finish their education and receive their high school diploma or GED. A key focus of this exploration was the influence of exposure to music education on their decision to return and finish school. In this chapter, I detail the process by which the data were generated, recorded, and analyzed. I also describe the setting and participant demographics. The research questions were designed to explore participants' perceptions of what changed their minds about their educational goals. The study results were generated from analyzing the data. The research questions were designed from a hermeneutical phenomenological approach of capturing the lived experience in a contextual expression. The research questions were: What are the lived experiences of male high school dropouts ages 18–22 years regarding their decision to return to school to complete the coursework necessary for receiving a high school diploma or GED, and what role might music have played in the decision to return to school to complete the necessary coursework?

Participant Demographics

I worked closely with the ABLE program in the rural area of Appalachian Ohio, to recruit participants. ABLE is a free program that provides services for anyone needing skills in postsecondary education training. ABLE also provides employment assistance.

This program is located at the Mid-East Career and Technological Centers in Zanesville, Ohio.

Flyers were used recruit participants for the present study. The flyers were distributed through emails and posted at the Zanesville campus of the Mid-East Career and Technological Centers. Individuals interested in participating then contacted me. The following criteria were established for study participation: Participants had to be males ages 18–22 years and living in the Appalachian region of Ohio. They had to have dropped out of school and had to be working on their GED or high school diploma or have completed one of these at the time of the study.

I met with all potential participants to ensure that they qualified for the study and to answer questions they might have had concerning the interview. Each potential participant volunteered to participate. Pseudonyms were assigned to protect their identities in study results. The pseudonyms are Stan, Tyson, Akin, James, Nolan, Brent, and Wally.

Stan's and James's interviews took place at their homes. I interviewed Nolan, Brent, Akin, Tyson, and Wally in an office reserved for us at the Mid-East Career and Technological Centers. Table 1 shows participant demographics. All of the following biographical information was current at the time the study was conducted.

Table 1

Research Participant Profiles

Name	Age at time of study	Educational status
Akin	22	Working on diploma
Stan	20	Working on GED
James	20	Finished
Nolan	19	Working on diploma
Tyson	21	Working on diploma
Wally	19	Working on diploma
Brent	21	Working on diploma

Akin

Akin is 22 years old. His parents are both deceased, and his grandmother raised him and his sister. Akin said that his grandmother had raised other children and when it came to Akin and his sister, she said she was tired of raising children. When they were very young, if they did not get the dishes finished Akin said their grandmother would call the police on them. There was not a lot of physical abuse, but the emotional and mental abuse made them feel caged. His sister was his best friend. Akin said he and his sister were very close. They did everything together and depended on one another.

Akin had two older stepsisters. They petitioned the court to obtain custody of Akin and his sister. Then they began to live with his stepsisters. Akin was 17 years of age when he went to live with his stepsisters on the family farm. The labor was extremely hard. His hands were always blistered. He convinced his stepsisters to allow him to attend

school online. Actually, he had tricked them. He had dropped out of school and did not attend school online. Through a series of horrific events, one of his stepsisters got involved with drugs, which led to the family breaking up. Akin was 18 years of age at the time and asked his grandmother if he could stay with her.

Today, Akin rents a room to live in and has a job. He is looking forward to getting his high school diploma and getting a better job to help support his sister, who he says is avery talented artist.

Stan

Stan is 20 years of age and married with stepchildren; the youngest is 11 years of age. He has two younger sisters. His mother abandoned them when he was very young, and she is still in jail. His father remarried. His father's new wife died, and he eventually lost custody of Stan and his two sisters. They went into foster care. His father met the court mandates and took classes to get custody of his children. Then his father married a third wife and got custody of Stan and his sisters.

At 17 years of age, Stan got in trouble and went to jail. Because of his stay in jail, he was not able to continue his schooling. Therefore, he dropped out of school. Stan now has the responsibilities of a family and wants to get a better job. He has been working on getting a GED for the last 5 months. Stan feels that finishing his education will help them have better job opportunities.

James

James did fairly well in life and school until his father died and his mother went with another man. After that, James and his two younger brothers felt as if they were left

on their own. His older brother became his role model. Unfortunately, James said he was a negative role model. He did drugs and did not finish school.

James followed his example. He listened to violent gangster rap music. James said that was where his thoughts were. Then, he met a girl who became his girlfriend. She encouraged him to do better and to understand that he deserved better. James said his girlfriend went to the principal of the school where he had dropped out and convinced the principal to give James another chance.

James only needed a few credits to graduate. Before he dropped out of school, his grades were As and Bs. He returned to school on strict probation and managed to graduate the same time his girlfriend did. At present, he is the only one of his siblings who has graduated from high school. Now 20 years old, James has a full-time job and is raising his two cousins, who are 14 and 16 years old. James stated that his goal is to be a role model for them.

Nolan

Nolan is 18 years of age and was raised by his mother and stepfather. He has two brothers, a sister, and the family dogs. The dogs are a very important part of the family. Nolan said his world started to change when his stepfather started drinking very heavily. After this, Nolan decided to drop out of school because he no longer wanted to go. His brothers also dropped out of school and only his sister continued to attend school.

Nolan decided to move away and stay with his cousins. But then something happened that changed Nolan's focus. Nolan said his older brother went back to school

and graduated. One of the reasons Nolan returned was because he and his brother were tired of struggling from job to job. They felt they could get better jobs with an education.

Tyson

Tyson is 21 years of age and divorced. He dropped out of school when he was 18 years of age. He did not like homeschooling and felt old enough to make his own decisions. His mother and father divorced early in his life. His mother remarried. Tyson said he hated his stepfather and that his mother seemed to focus more on his stepfather than she did on Tyson and his brother. Tyson's real father tried to be a father to Tyson and his brother, but Tyson said he did not know how. He jumped from job to job, so lack of money was an issue.

Tyson's uncle died when he was 7 years old. He was Tyson's hero. After that, Tyson did not have anyone with whom to connect. Tyson said music is what saved his life. It allowed him to escape, and listening to music helps him think. Music has gotten him through the rough times in his life.

Tyson was interested in playing an instrument at school, and the teacher assigned him a clarinet. He did not want to play the clarinet; he wanted to play percussion, but she would not allow him to do so. She never gave Tyson a reason why he could not play percussion. He said he thinks he could have done well if he been allowed to play the instrument that he wanted to play.

Tyson decided to return to school get his high school diploma. He said his reason was because "some jobs will only hire you if you have a high school diploma, not a

GED." After going from job to job, he was hired at the warehouse of a big company. His goal is to work in the field of medicine or culinary arts.

Tyson said his being back in school has influenced his little brother, who is doing much better in school now. Tyson wants to be a successful role model for him. His brother is joining clubs for extracurricular activities. Tyson said, " I am very proud of him. I tell him never give up; a better day is coming."

Wally

Wally is 19 years of age. At age 7 years he had his spleen removed because of a rare disease that runs in his family. He gets sick often from not having a spleen. In elementary school, he had strep throat so bad that he had to have his tonsils and adenoids removed. The family was supportive during his illnesses because his grandmother, mother, and uncles had all lost their spleens. His sister and his aunt still have their spleens. Wally said it has taught him how to survive physical challenges.

Wally again became ill in high school. Because he was on narcotics, he was not allowed to attend school. During the 10 months of therapy, he fell behind in school and was not enrolled. Becasue he was considered a high school dropout, Wally said, "I became very depressed." His father and his grandfather were alcoholics. However, even with his depression, Wally chose not to drink alcohol. He stated that he and his sister do not do drugs and that he will not hang around his friends if he thinks they are going to drink alcohol or do drugs. Wally said, "I would rather stay home. My choice is to live a life respecting the law."

Music played a major role in Wally's life. He said it helped bring him out of depression. He would pick songs that had lyrics with positive messages and meaning for him personally. These songs would explain exactly what he was going through, and he could relate to them. It was what he used to manage his depression.

Wally did not play any musical instruments in school, but he does love listening to music. Attending concerts is something he enjoys. Wally said if he ever has a bad day, he just goes home and listens to musicsuch as that of Machine Gun Kelly. "These lyrics motivate me to be positive."

Wally has never been in trouble, and he intends to maintain that record. Now that he is back in school, he chooses to associate with positive people. He would like to see a place where people his age can go that is smoke free, drug free, and alcohol free, a young people they can play games like pool and Ping-Pong.

Wally said there need to be more safe environments for kids to have fun. He feels kids need more choices. His adviceto young people would be to open up their horizons, listen to all kinds of music, and find something positive in life to follow.

Brent

Brent was raised by his grandmother. His parents lost custody of him after an incident happened when he was about 4 years old. A neighbor reported that he was outside walking alone, seemingly abandoned. While living with his grandmother, his parents would still visit him. After a series of events Brent ended up in foster care and was abused while he was there. From that point on he was in and out of several foster homes.

Brent was caught smoking marijuana and was sent to juvenile corrections. At the age of 18 years he went and lived with his father. After one incident, the school Brent was going to expel him for 180 days, Brent said he decided to quit school, to avoid being expelled for a 180 days.

Brent listens to his music while lifting weights. He said he did not know where he would be without music and that it saved his life. He decided that it was time to go back to school. He hoped to have better job opportunities. One of the teachers helped him get a job. This opened up training for him to acquire special skills on that job. Brent said he now chooses new friends and stays away from drugs.

Data Collection

There was a private reserved office space at the Mid-East Career and Technological Centers for me to meet with the participants for the interviews. The interviews ranged from 30 to 40 min. Each interview was digitally recorded. Prior to the interview, each participant reviewed the consent forms and asked any questions of concern. During the interviews, names were not used to protect the participants' identities. After the interviews were completed, they were uploaded to my computer and then erased from the digital recorder.

Each interview was transcribed using Garage Band and Dragon Dictate Naturally Speaking 11.0 software. Garage Band allowed me to slow down the playback tempo of the interview while speaking into Dragon Dictate, which typed what I was speaking. After all of the interviews were transcribed, I saved them on an external hard drive, which cannot be accessed without a password. The data will be destroyed after 6 years.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to produce findings. Data analysis was the first part of a three-step process that included analysis, interpretation of the data, and discussion of findings. This presented challenges regarding examining massive amounts of data, identifying patterns, and constructing frameworks from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Glaser (1941) suggested applying critical thinking with consideration to persistent, of an issue, supporting the specific category or theme. Glaser's recommendations were to remain open and trust one's first thoughts when identifying patterns.

I used the modified Affinity approach for data analysis (Brassard, 1989). The research team approach was to use word categorization (Patton, 2002). The data analysis process began after interviews were transcribed. Then, each participant's responses were divided into small phrases. The research team saw the responses for the first time as they categorized the data. The process unfolded as follows:

1. The analytical process began of sorting and sifting data to identify similarities and categorical relationships. The research team of three now began with a quiet, high intensity and energetic concentration. After isolating patterns, commonalities, and similarities within phrases, the data began to take on form. We were then able to form a database based on a set of consistent generalizations.

2. The research team and I had a threaded discussion and then identified and labeled sets of generalization, pairing consistencies with header cards. As a group, we felt comfortable formalizing thematic constructs.

3. Our next task was counting how many comments were in each grouping.

4. After brainstorming, the research team condensed and regrouped. Themes were combined and subthemes were created. Six main themes were identified along with 16 subthemes.

Results

As noted, the analysis resulted in six main themes with 16 subthemes. Table 2 shows the main themes and subthemes categorically. There were 411 coded statements produced from the data reviewed. Thirty-one percent of the data related to family influences, 21% to educational outcomes, 13% to music, 13% to self-value, 11% to educational interruptions, and 10% to support systems. The research team then proceeded with discussions of identifying subthemes. Using descriptive quotes from the data provided clarification for structuring the categories of themes and subthemes.

Table 2

Summary of Themes From Interviews

Themes	# of coded statements	% of coded statements
Family influences		
Parents	35	8
Grandparents	22	5
Siblings	15	4
Social influences	38	9
Life circumstances	21	5
Total	131	31
Educational outcomes		
School	53	13
Job opportunities	32	8
Total	85	21
Exposure to music		
Total	54	13
Self-value		
Reflections	44	11
Decisions	8	2
Total	52	13
Educational interruptions		
Challenges	19	4
Delinquency	19	4
Violence	9	2
Total	47	11
Support systems		
Helps	20	5
Role modeling	13	3
Outlets	9	2
Total	42	10
Total coded statements	411	99 (rounded)

Examples from the family influences theme and subthemes represent reflections and feelings that influenced the participant's decisions. The participant's statements are as follows. Nolan said that when he was very young, he got along with his stepfather. Then his stepfather began to drink heavily, and after that everything changed. Brent said he was in and out of jail, without family support and no one to talk to. Tyler felt like his parents did not care about him and his brother. "I also had a stepsister and stepbrother, whom I did not like. I do like them now and try to protect them."

Education outcomes were the effects of possible opportunities in education and occupation. These outcomes reflected issues that might arise if one continues to be a dropout and the challenges of continuing one's education to create positive employment outcomes. Nolan reflected as most of the participants commented in saying, "Being trained, with an education, will help you get through life." Stan said, "The more knowledge you have the more things are able to do." Brent said, "I came back with a determination to finish." James said, "An education is needed more now than ever. I feel better now that I have mine."

Exposure to music was a category in which every statement participants made was positive. Stan said that even though he was listening to negative music, it began the show him what he did not want. Then, he became more of a positive thinker. Wade said, "I could always find music to help explain what I was going through. It calms me. It helps me think." Brent said, "Music saved me. I do not know where I would be if it had not been for music."

Self-value was the category of expectancy and vision. Reflections were where philosophical statements were made. Tyson said, "Don't ever get up. Know that it is not over. A lot can happen that will make you better." Akin said, "Things that are important will affect my future. I pay attention to them now." The subcategory of decisions reflected decisions that were made as a result of dropping out of school. James's comment about being too young to make major decisions on his own represented the majority view. Brent said, "Nothing is handed to you, you have to work for it. With all I have gone through I feel a lot stronger now." Stan said, " I feel like it is a privilege that I've been given the opportunity to get my GED."

Educational interruptions represented issues that blocked successful outcomes. Challenges were the obstacles that presented life circumstances. Brent said, "Resisting friends that you want to help, but, cannot, can be a challenge." Akin said, "The child abuse I experienced was not addressed." The subcategory of juvenile delinquency represented obstacles that some of these young men face. Stan said, "Not having a role model led to being locked up, like most of my friends."

Violence was a present obstacle. It seems a way of life that is inescapable. Brent said, "My ex-girlfriend ran over my foot with a car. After that, I hit the car and damaged it. I am no longer allowed to drive." Stan said, "I have been stabbed by a female friend with a fork, but I don't believe in hitting women. But I will punch out any man that comes up in my face."

Supports systems were the positive area in participants' lives. Nolan said, "Our dogs were big part of our life. The dogs were always someone that you can have fun with

and love." Stan said, "Our dogs were really important in terms of being a friend and companion." Tyler said, " I wanted to prove to my family that I could be something victorious and be a model for them." Stan said, "I watched my father learn to cook so he could prove to the court that he could take care of us. We do not always get along but he tried." Wade said he just started thinking positive things and chose to be around positive people to pull himself out of being depressed.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

To ensure that validity and reliability had been accomplished, I implemented several strategies recommended by Creswell (2013) for a qualitative research study. All participants were provided a transcript to check and evaluate for accuracy. They were also given the final summary of themes to respond and review. The research team reviewed the final coding categories, including the thematic analysis.

Results

The research questions were: What are the lived experiences of male high school dropouts ages 18–22 years regarding their decision to return to school to complete the coursework necessary for receiving a high school diploma or GED, and what role might music have played in the decision to return to school to complete the necessary coursework. After interviewing the seven participants about decisions regarding returning to school, the results showed a variety of reasons and motivations for their decisions.

One of the congruent motivators was jobs and employment choices. The majority felt that with a completed high school diploma or GED they had better options for employment opportunities. Cultural and economic barriers were similar. Most

experienced living in poor economic conditions, struggling to have their needs met. The grandmother was the primary caretaker for the majority of participants. Role models of immediate family and relatives who had finished high school were rare. Therefore, most of these young men will be or have been the first in their family to graduate from high school or receive their GED. Their futures are not clear to them. Their immediate goals are to graduate, get a job, and provide for basic living.

At the end of each interview, I asked if music had any influence on their returning to school. The majority said that music influenced their life in general. Music provided a conduit for destressing and deescalating. It was a vehicle that provided comfort. Music allowed them to escape, think, and organize their thoughts. Most of the participants had not been exposed to a musical education while attending school. However, listening to music was part of their survival kit when depressed, lonely, and without resources for hearing their voice.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

The present study's focus was on capturing the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of young Appalachian males who had dropped out of school and returned. The purpose was to gain knowledge on the influence of exposure to music education and its role in deciding to return to school to complete high school diplomas or GEDs. The research questions that guided the data collection in Chapter IV generated interview responses that were analyzed into patterns, relationships, and themes. The data analysis generated these themes and subthemes:

- family influences (subthemes: parents, grandparents, siblings, social influences, and life circumstances),

- educational outcomes (subthemes: schools and job opportunities),

- exposure to music,

- self-value (subthemes: reflections and decisions),

- educational interruptions (subthemes: challenges, delinquency, and violence), and

- support systems (subthemes: helps, role modeling, and outlets).

In Chapter 5, I explain the interpretations, findings, and implications for social change. I also present recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter serves as a perceptual lens on the insights and interpretations derived from the results from the present study that indicate avenues for social change. In this chapter, I present a discussion of findings and conclusions as well as recommendations based on them. I also review assumptions and limitations as well as recommendations for future research. The discussion and summary reflect my personal perspectives and the insights I gained from the present study.

Study Overview

The present study was an investigation of the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of male high school dropouts in the Appalachian region of Ohio. The goal was to explore what motivated these individuals to return to school and if exposure to music education was a part of their motivation. I also wanted to identify factors that could have contributed to their decision to achieve greater success by returning to school after having dropped out. The focus was on the lived experience of Appalachian males, their family culture, and if their socioeconomic status played a role in why they dropped out of school. The goal was to investigate how such factors affected these individuals' mindsets regarding education.

In the Appalachian region, the dropout rate is 50% higher than the national average (Kids Count Data Center, 2011). In this area, there is an emphasis on family values but not necessarily on education (Caprara et al., 2008). In Chapter 2, I reviewed

the current literature and explained the gap in research that connects generational patterns and other influences that might interfere with educational decisions (Lamb, 2009).

There were three theoretical orientations in the current study. One was Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences, which relates to learning styles. Without preschool education exposure, learning styles vary once children begin school. One of Gardner's multiple intelligences is music. Music is a significant aspect of culture; however, there are few studies on its effects on and roles in the lives of youth at risk. There has also been limited research on how or if music influences motivation for educational goals.

The second theoretical orientation in the present study was Vygotsky's (1978) developmental constructivism theory, which holds that cognitive learning from the family precedes a child's physical development. Because this theory supports the child's cultural and social influences, a child can move faster or slower in thieir cognitive develoment than in their physical development. Keller (2011) supported Vygotsky (1978) by stating that changes in one's socioeconomic status can change one's perception, memory, and problem-solving approach. It is evident that cultural environment and socioeconomic status play a role in shaping cognition (Bruner, 1996) and have influenced the cognitive development of young Appalachian men. The reflections of their self-view, mental awareness, and self-value have been affected by their quality of life (Bandura, 1986).

Finally, Bandura's (1989) theory of self-efficacy explains the relationship between perception and motivation. How people control their self-determination

determines how they execute various tasks, roles, and actions in the lives. Using open-ended questions allowed me to explore these areas.

Research Questions

The research questions for the present study were designed to reflect a hermeneutical phenomenology approach to capturing the lived experiences of the identified sample for the present study. The two research questions were: What are the lived experiences of male high school dropouts ages 18–22 years regarding their decision to return to school to complete the coursework necessary for receiving a high school diploma or GED? What role might music have played in the dcision to return to school to complete the necessary coursework? The responses to these questions reflected the participants' emotions and attitudes related to their pasts. These influences seemed to have affected the decisions they have made.

All participants had experienced various types of drama and challenges in their lives, which affected their life outcomes. Most of their parents did not finish high school; as such, most of the participants will be the first in their families to have achieved this goal. Most of the participants had lived with a grandparent who discouraged their finishing school. Instead, these participants were pushed toward getting a job to help support and contribute to the family's income.

Not having money to meet their daily living needs was a common concern. Socioeconomic concerns were prevalent with each participant. Consistent jobs were rare in each family. For those who did work, maintaining a job to help support the family had

not been modeled. Cultural influences did not emphasize the importance of an education as much as getting a job and earning money at an early age (Gorden & Wilburn, 2010).

The Appalachian area is economically distressed. Most of the participants in the present study have friends who are incarcerated and others who are deceased. These friends chose illegal paths to make money. Some of the participants were drug abusers like their friends but made the choice to return to school in the hope of having a better life. Participants spoke of one of the main reasons for returning to school was to attain a better life with better options.

Music has played a significant role in the participants' lives. It was not necessarily a motivation for returning to school but rather a sustainer and peacemaker in their lives while they made the decision to return to school. Some participants acknowledged that music saved their lives. Music played the role of destressor and deescalator. The lyrics of the songs to which they listened told stories that gave them hope. Through the lyrics they heard about other peoples' hard times and how they survived them and became successful. These musical artists became role models for them when they lacked other role models in their lives.

Having a role model helped boost participants' self-esteem and confidence and their feeling that they could become more successful people. Changing their self-efficacy about who they were and where they came from gave them motivation to return to school. Most wanted better jobs, and they saw education was the key.

Interpretations of the Findings

In Chapter 4, I presented participants' answers to the research questions and discussed the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data, which represented the participants' lived experiences. In this chapter, I interpret the findings and link them back to the findings from the literature review conducted for the present study.

Theme 1: Socioeconomic and Cultural Influences in the Family

Patterns of family relationships indigenous to the Appalachian culture , including the traditions of family goals and resistance to change, were confirmed in analysis of the data from the interviews with these young men. The family culture included the subthemes of parents, grandparents, siblings, social influences, and life circumstances. Vygotsky's (1934) theory supports that family, school, and the community influence a person's character.

Poverty has a direct impact on educational goals (Toivanen et al., 2011). Educational interruptions, as reflected in the data derived from the interviews in the present study, also presented challenges. Lower income neighborhoods tend to lead to delinquency (Ohmer et al., 2010). According to Toivanen et al. (2011), 51% of 12th graders in 11 Appalachian counties are working after school. Results As James said, "I felt my choices were to do drugs or go back to finish my education to get a better job. I have to find a way to support myself." Exposure to drugs and violence in the neighborhood is directly linked to educational disadvantages (Ohmer et al., 2010). James said, "I would not have graduated had it not been for my girlfriend's support. I was out

there fighting in the streets." Attemping to become the first to graduate in one's family when it is not a family tradition can also present difficulties (Baer, 2010).

Even though education is a key component of social progress, in the Appalachian culture, having a job takes precedence and is more in accord with family values (Gore & Wilburn, 2010). From generation to generation, some families have only had social support systems on which to depend. Brent said, "While living with my grandmother, she encouraged me to drop out of school and get a job to help support the family." Grandmothers as primary caretakers are becoming increasingly common. Grandparents living on a limited source of income, with the demands of raising the grandchildren, have a direct effect on the educational opportunities for those children. In the Appalachian areas, 38% of grandmothers are the primary caregivers (Bigbee et al., 2011). Being denied opportunities such as after-school activities, sports, and music can affect self-esteem, self-value, and confidence in individuals' educational abilities (Keller, 2011).

Theme 2: Effects of Modeling, Mentoring, and Self-Motivation

A student's confidence to pursue personal goals can be affected by cultural and social environments (Hagg, 2010). As Tyson said, "My mother thought that I would do just like her brother and drop out of school and I did. No one expected me to do anything but fail. I became self-motivated and wanted to prove everyone wrong." Without mentoring, educational services, and financial incentives, academic failure will continue (Rodríguez-Planas, 2012). Data from the present study supported that the lack of a support system included the absence of role modeling and guidance for these young men.

Mentoring can be a key factor in achieving academic success (Ohmer et al., 2010). Stan said, "My wife was my motivation to go back to school. She encouraged me to get a better job and take care my responsibilities." The triadic model of self-advocacy, attribution, and appraisal changes self-perception (Garrin, 2013). Garrin (2013) emphasized that this triadic model serves as effective stimuli to create transformation in students. Through self-advocacy, attribution, and appraisal, the level of self-efficacy is raised. Building confidence to move beyond social class limitations helps individuals reach their greater potential (Brigman & Webb, 2010).

Theme 3: Role of Music in Decision-Making

Lacking success at school and at home can define a student as being at risk (Haag, 2010). Creative communication is an identifiable cognitive skill among youth at risk. This learning style of high creativity can possibly connect them to a positive learning experience (Hagg, 2010). Even though they have poor processing and reasoning skills, they are creative listeners (Haag, 2010).

In Appalachian culture, music is a construct that plays a role in the family structure. Music can offer a service that is valuable to one's culture. As James said, "Music is a lifestyle." Belief in one's ability will directly affect the outcome of individual performance. Bandura's (1986) theory of self-efficacy supports that students will reach higher goals when they feel they are capable of achieving them.

Music is one of Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences. Helding (2010) showed an association between music and cognitive learning skills. Because of these cognitive connections, music skills can be transferred to other educational areas. As Tyson said,

"Music helps me think. It clears my mind. Then I can make good decisions." Przbylski et al. (2013) stated that music could help individuals develop skills that are transferable without conscious awareness. Brent said,

> Music saved my life! I do not know where I would be if it were not for my music. It calms me down and it helps me think clearly. I put my earplugs in and listen to my music while I work out in the gym.

> Cotton (2010) showed that music has a positive influence on educational outcomes. It is a proven stimulus that raises self-efficacy and leads to self-confidence and making better decisions (Bos, 2012; Bowell & Heap, 2010). Data from the present study showed that the most comments participants made were related to music.

> Exposure to education can influence competency levels, cognitive achievement, and perceptual learning (Keller, 2011). Culture influences the development of higher learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The findings from my exploration with the Appalachian male participants indicated that the themes previously presented directly influenced their educational decisions.

> Modeling behavior after others, verbal responses from family members, and socioeconomic challenges all played a significant role in the decisions made to drop out of school. These participants were successful in overcoming these obstacles. Many are not. Having this understanding for future reference, we can counterbalance with verbal and financial support systems when necessary. The responses to the research questions further explained the significance of music in the participants' lives. Offering music

education to youth identified as being at risk or who may become at risk could result in educational outcomes.

Limitations

The Appalachian area chosen for this study was a limitation. A larger geographical area would have resulted in a larger population from which to draw a study sample. In turn, this might have broadened the variety of participants and added depth to the data drawn from their experiences and knowledge. More age groups could have been included as well as young women to also reflect a wider range of experiences. With a wider range in age, younger students who are contemplating quitting school could add their perspectives. Including young women might reveal gender diversity regarding the experiences that were the focus of the present study and would provide the opportunity to explore various interests and commonalities.

Recommendations

Educational barriers influencing decisions of young people are not just a concern for the Appalachian males; they are a nationwide concern. About 30% of high school students 17 years of age and above drop out of school (Kids Count Data Center, 2011). That percentage is almost double in the Appalachian area.

Recommendations for outcomes from this research could be applicable for further research in other areas. Having explored effective motivational stimuli for Appalachian males could help break educational barriers throughout the country.

McKethan, Rabinowitz, and Kermode (2010) stated that aspirations for future dreams are significantly low among the Appalachian population. This could be due to a

low skillset for learning. One of the barriers is the educational system's measuring intelligence based on test outcomes. A greater recognition of how students gather information through their various senses could create better educational outcomes (Gardner, 1993). Using Gardener's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences, which includes music, measuring different skillset levels could offer insight for motivation. An exploration along these lines could offer further data regarding the effects of exposure to music education.

Another barrier to be approached is interactions between peers and adults. Performance creates interaction and promotes support systems. This tool already exists in fine arts curricula. For students who have not responded to school in a traditional manner, multidisciplinary perspectives could provide unique experiences and better engage them in their learning.

The Appalachian area covers parts of 13 states. The recommendation is that research efforts could extend to cover more Appalachian states with comparative age categories, culture, and educational levels of each school's music curriculum.

Outcomes from the present study supported that music played an effective role in participants' lives, specifically regarding their clarity of thinking (van Manen, 1990). Therefore, the recommendation is to further explore how music could influence beliefs about education.

Implications

Bringing hope to other youth and empowering them with the opportunity for educational success are just two of the societal changes that can happen when more

students graduate. Improving employment opportunities through better educational attainment builds a stronger community.

The United States economy could be increased by $154 billion if the 1.2 million students who drop out of school each year (U.S. Department of Education (2012) had a high school diploma. If students understand their self-value and self-worth (Bandura, 1986), their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward education could be positive. Knowing factors about different skillsets for learning and identifying these skillsets are ways to reach more students. Using this strategy will better meet their educational needs by taking into consideration how they learn (Gardner, 1993; Travis & Bowman, 2011). Using this strategy can also identify better ways to teach and reach students and better equip them with the tools for overcoming obstacles such as learning disabilities (Robick, 2010). There could be potentially positive social/cultural changes through overcoming barriers to success (Gilton, 2012).

Conclusion

In this qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological study, open-ended questions were used to explore the lived experiences of Appalachian males ages 18–22 years who had dropped out of school and reentered to finish their high school diploma or GED. The focus of the research questions was on the experiences and influences that affected their decision to return to high school. During the interviews, I explored their attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about their family, culture, and socioeconomics. The hope was to find evidence of what motivated the participants to return to school and if exposure to music

education was part of that motivation. The theoretical frameworks of Gardner (1933), Bandura (1986), and Vygotsky (1934) guided the exploration.

It was concluded that family, culture, and socioeconomic influences affected self-confidence and contributed to student's decisions to drop out of school. Lack of support from home and school also resulted in educational disadvantages. Better job choices were the motivation for returning to school and completing their education. Music served as a stabilizing conduit for clarity of thinking. Unfortunately, only one participant had been exposed to music education. The data showed that music played an important role in each participant's thinking process and aided their decision-making. Research supported music's influences on language and perceptual cognition (Hallam, 2010). Therefore, I would further conclude the importance of exposure to music education as beneficial for educational decisions. Positive influences (Cotton, 2010) on educational outcomes prove music to be an important stimulus to improve self-confidence (Garrin, 2013).

Acquiring a belief system can build character, raise confidence and self-esteem, and help individuals improve their choices and chances for the future through educational success. From the participants' voices and their lived collective experiences, "There is always room for change, you only have to change your mind."

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Appendix A: The Intelligences, in Gardner's Words

- Linguistic intelligence is the capacity to use language, your native language, and perhaps other languages, to express what is on your mind and to understand other people. Poets really specialize in linguistic intelligence, but any kind of writer, orator, speaker, lawyer, or a person for whom language is an important stock in trade highlights linguistic intelligence.

- People with a highly developed logical-mathematical intelligence understand the underlying principles of some kind of a causal system, the way a scientist or a logician does; or can manipulate numbers, quantities, and operations, the way a mathematician does.

- Spatial intelligence refers to the ability to represent the spatial world internally in your mind—the way a sailor or airplane pilot navigates the large spatial world, or the way a chess player or sculptor represents a more circumscribed spatial world. Spatial intelligence can be used in the arts or in the sciences. If you are spatially intelligent and oriented toward the arts, you are more likely to become a painter or a sculptor or an architect than, say, a musician or a writer. Similarly, certain sciences like anatomy or topology emphasize spatial intelligence.

- Bodily kinesthetic intelligence is the capacity to use your whole body or parts of your body—your hand, your fingers, your arms—to solve a problem, make something, or put on some kind of a production. The most evident examples are people in athletics or the performing arts, particularly dance or acting.

- Musical intelligence is the capacity to think in music, to be able to hear patterns, recognize them, remember them, and perhaps manipulate them. People who have a strong musical intelligence don't just remember music easily—they can't get it out of their minds, it's so omnipresent. Now, some people will say, "Yes, music is important, but it's a talent, not an intelligence." And I say, "Fine, let's call it a talent." But, then we have to leave the word *intelligent* out of *all* discussions of human abilities. You know, Mozart was damned smart!

- Interpersonal intelligence is understanding other people. It is an ability we all need, but is at a premium if you are a teacher, clinician, salesperson, or politician. Anybody who deals with other people has to be skilled in the interpersonal sphere.

- Intrapersonal intelligence refers to having an understanding of yourself, of knowing who you are, what you can do, what you want to do, how you react to things, which things to avoid, and which things to gravitate toward. We are drawn to people who have a good understanding of themselves because those people

tend not to screw up. They tend to know what they can do. They tend to know what they can't do. They tend to know where to go if they need help.

- Naturalist intelligence designates the human ability to discriminate among living things (plants, animals) as well as sensitivity to other features of the natural world (clouds, rock configurations). This ability was clearly of value in our evolutionary past as hunters, gatherers, and farmers; it continues to be central in such roles as botanist or chef. I also speculate that much of our consumer society exploits the naturalist intelligences, which can be mobilized in the discrimination among cars, sneakers, kinds of makeup, and the like. The kind of pattern recognition valued in certain of the sciences may also draw upon naturalist intelligence.