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Terry James Larabee

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COMMON FACTORS LINKING MALE HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETERS FROM A
LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC URBAN SETTING

By

Terry James Larabee

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Elementary, Middle School, and Secondary Education
in the Department of Educational Leadership and Workforce Development

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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2008

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LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC URBAN SETTING

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The purpose of this study was to determine if specific characteristics of male students in a low socio-economic urban setting predispose them to successful high school completion. Rather than focusing on dropouts, this research focused on male students who are successful high school completers. They were compared to one another in order to find correlations among variables which made them successful in completing high school. While research exists detailing the reasons students choose to drop out of school, the factors that lead to successful graduation from high school have yet to be determined. This research addresses that gap.

This study addresses two research questions: (a) are there common factors among male students from a low socio-economic urban setting which predispose them to successful high school completion and (b) what are the common factors among male students from a low socio-economic urban setting which predispose them to successful high school completion?

The information found in the review of related literature and research indicated that the variables (preschool education participation, sports/extracurricular activity participation, family configuration, participation in faith-based organizations, parents' educational attainment, sibling educational attainment, attendance, parental employment, participation in vocational studies, and participation in tutoring programs for high stakes exit exams) were appropriate for this study. An instrument was piloted to obtain information on the variables. Forty male students were randomly selected from 240 male students who graduated from Meridian High School during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years.

After collecting and analyzing the data using binomial distribution and chi-square analysis, the researcher drew several conclusions. Preschool participation, sibling educational attainment, attendance, family configuration, participation in a faith-based organization, parent educational attainment, parent employment, vocational program participation, and extracurricular activity/sport participation were reported by participants at statistically significant frequencies which could not be attributed to chance. The chi-square values indicate nine of the 54 possible variable pairs have statistically significant correlations.

Conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study indicate that certain characteristics of students do contribute to high school completion. This study should be replicated with a larger sample in other locations to validate the findings.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to Ronnie Gholston, Sarah Thompson, and Dr. Bill Myers. These people have been my biggest fans over the years and have consistently encouraged me and pushed me forward toward meeting my goals. They are also all life long educators who model and exemplify professionalism and dedication to their students. Without these people, there is no doubt that my life would be considerably different today. Much of my success is due to them.

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Finally, I thank all of the survey participants that took the time to help me gather data. It is their success as students that made the subject of this dissertation important and relevant. Hopefully by sharing their success stories, we as educators can apply the lessons that they have taught us so that we can help more students to be successful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Every 29 seconds, a high school student in the United States drops out of high school (Bridgeland, Dilulio, Jr., & Morison, 2006). Nearly one million high school students drop out each year in the United States (Bridgeland et al.). Almost one-third of all high school students enrolled in public schools fail to graduate with their class each year (Bridgeland et al.). With statistics like these, retention of students in high school, until they graduate, is a significant problem facing educators in the United States today.

In November 2006, State Superintendent of Education for Mississippi Hank Bounds stated that the current dropout rate in Mississippi should be a “wake-up call” to all educators (Coffey, 2006). The graduation rate for the 2005-2006 school year was 61.1% (Coffey). This correlated with a drop out of 26.6% (Coffey). The remainder of the students in Mississippi were classified as completers, students who finished high school with something other than a diploma. In response, Bounds and the Mississippi Department of Education set new goals for graduation rates in Mississippi.

The State of Mississippi set a long-range goal to have a graduation rate of eighty-five percent for the 2018-2019 school year. The goal is to be met through district level and state level dropout prevention programs. A short term goal was set to decrease the state dropout rate by fifty percent (50%) in the 2011-2012 school year. These goals

adopted by the State of Mississippi indicate the importance of effective dropout prevention programs at the district and state levels.

This research will examine students in a large urban school district in Mississippi. Rather than focusing on dropouts, this research will focus on male students who are successful high school completers. They will be compared to one another to find correlations among variables which made them successful in completing high school.

Statement of the Problem

This research will attempt to find statistical correlations among male students from a low socio-economic urban area who successfully completed high school. Ten variables have been identified as possibly being linked to high school graduation (references). This research will attempt to determine which variables or combinations of variables are most strongly linked to successful completion of high school in an urban context.

Significance of the Problem

Much has been written in recent years about the importance of increasing the graduation rate of students in public schools. The United States currently has a graduation rate between 68 and 71 percent (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). High dropout rates cause problems for many groups of people as well as the dropouts themselves. High dropout rates can have detrimental impacts on the dropout, his or her parents, the school, and society as a whole (Madriaga, 2008).

Consequences for dropping out are not limited to the student who drops out. They may extend to the parents of dropouts and schools. Parents of high school dropouts can

face legal consequences based on allowing their children to drop out. All states have a compulsory school attendance age of 16 or higher (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). Of the one million students who drop out of school each year, many are younger than the compulsory school attendance age in their state (Bridgeland et al.). Parents of those students are considered to be breaking the law and guilty of a crime (Madriaga, 2008). Those parents are subject to prosecution (Madriaga). They may pay fines and in some cases may be incarcerated due to the truancy of their children. In Mississippi, parents of children who drop out of school prior to the age of 17 may be fined up to \$1,000, be incarcerated for up to 1 year, or both (Mississippi Code of 1972 § 97-5-39). Therefore, parents have a personal stake in the success of their child in earning a high school diploma.

In addition to the negative impact dropouts have on themselves and their parents, high numbers of dropouts can adversely impact schools. Funding for schools and allocation of teacher units is primarily based on the ADA (average daily attendance) and on the number of students enrolled. Therefore, a high number of students who drop out of a particular school can cause the funding to that school to be decreased (Madriaga, 2008). In cases of decreased funding, programs may be cut and teaching positions are cut in order to make up for the shortfalls (Madriaga). The school risks losing the confidence of the community if there are high numbers of dropouts (Madriaga). The citizens in the community may begin to wonder what the school is doing wrong or why the employees at the school are not helping the students (Madriaga). The community may be concerned

purely out of a sense of obligation to the students; however, it may be concerned due to the negative impacts dropouts have on the community and society as a whole.

High school dropouts have many negative impacts on society. In fact, they could become a drain on society and on the economy (Focus Adolescent Services, n.d.). Each high school dropout may cost the community up to \$500,000 over a lifetime of public assistance, welfare, incarceration costs, and health care expenses (Indiana State Board of Education, 2003). The working members of society are forced to pay for these costs due to higher crime rates and unemployment rates of high school dropouts (Madriaga, 2008; Woods, 2001). Almost half of the inmates incarcerated today are high school dropouts (Focus Adolescent Services). Half of the households on welfare are headed by an individual who did not complete high school (Focus Adolescent Services). All of this leads to a constant strain on the national economy by individuals who failed to earn a GED or high school diploma. To put it in perspective, the United States could have realized almost \$330 billion in spending power and taxable income if the entire class of 2007 had graduated on time (High School Dropouts, 2007). While society is negatively impacted by dropouts, the dropout has the most to lose by not completing high school.

Students who drop out of high school prior to graduation also face possible severe repercussion including limiting their wage earning ability. High school dropouts are likely to find it difficult to find a job (Madriaga, 2008). In fact, they are three times as likely to be unemployed when compared to college graduates (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). Those who do find employment could make approximately \$200,000 less than high school graduates and \$800,000 less than college graduates in their lifetimes (Focus

Adolescent Services, n.d.). Those dropouts without a GED could earn 30% less than those who do earn a GED (High School Dropouts, 2007).

A significant number of high school dropouts will not be able to find employment due to under-qualification for positions and are more likely to be welfare dependent or unemployed (High School Dropouts, 2007; Oreopolous, 2007). As a result, individuals who drop out of high school are more likely to live below the poverty line by fifty percent more than high school graduates (Bridgeland et al., 2006a; Oreopolous). High school dropouts are more likely to be what the American public calls “poor” than high school graduates and completers (Oreopolous).

In addition to the consequences that deal with finances and employment, high school dropouts also face social problems as a result of not completing high school. Some of these consequences deal with familial relationships. High school dropouts are more likely to be divorced than high school and college graduates (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). They are also more likely to have a child who chooses to drop out of high school (Bridgeland et al.).

High school dropouts are at a higher risk for negative interactions with society. They are more likely to engage in premature sexual behavior which increases the likelihood of teen pregnancy and single parenthood (Bridgeland et al., 2006a; Woods, 2001). They are more likely to become involved in substance abuse or suicide attempts than individuals who complete high school (Bridgeland et al.; High School Dropouts, 2007; Woods). They are more likely to be the victim of a crime, commit a crime, be incarcerated, or be on death row than their counterparts who complete high school

(Bridgeland et al.; High School Dropouts; Madriaga, 2008; Woods). Dropouts are eight times more likely to be incarcerated in jail or prison at some point in their lives than high school graduates (Bridgeland et al.).

High school completers reap some benefits other than financial benefits from finishing high school. Each year of successful high school completion increases an individual's perception of good health by 6% (Bridgeland et al., 2006a; Oreopolous, 2007). Each year of successful high school completion increases a person's overall satisfaction with life by 5.2% (Oreopolous). Individuals who do not complete high school can be expected to have decreased perceptions of health and satisfaction with their lives (Oreopolous).

On a personal level, high school dropouts have an increased likelihood of facing economic, social, and health consequences. Individuals who earn a high school diploma may face the same consequences or problems. By finishing high school, they decreased the chances of those consequences for themselves and their families.

Need for the Study

In 2007, Mississippi Code of 1972 § 37-13-80 created the Office of Dropout Prevention (Mississippi Department of Education, n.d.). The Legislature sent a message that the dropout rate was alarmingly high in Mississippi and that it needed to be formally addressed. A statewide dropout prevention program was implemented from this office (Mississippi Code of 1972 § 37-13-80). The Office of Dropout Prevention and the Mississippi Department of Education mandated that all school districts in Mississippi

create and implement a dropout prevention program (Mississippi Code of 1972 § 37-13-80).

Many of those programs and much of the current research on high school dropouts focuses on the negative aspects of schools and the negative actions of students which could cause high dropout rates (Bridgeland, Norman, Scheppach, & Stengel, 2006). Students make choices to dropout based on a multitude of variables such as teen parenthood, family support, caring for an ill parent, disinterest in school, or feeling disenfranchised from the school (Bridgeland et al.). Current research clearly demonstrates the reasons students have for dropping out.

According to research 70% of students believe that they could have graduated from high school if they had so desired (Bridgeland et al., 2006b). This illustrates that dropout prevention can work if the focus is on helping students to make the choice to stay in school and graduate. There has been little previous research concerning why successful students choose not to drop out of high school. New information must be documented in this area in order to create dropout prevention programs to address the needs of students.

With legislation and oversight in place to insure that each school district in Mississippi has a dropout prevention program, it is important that those programs address ways to encourage students to finish high school. The goal of this research is not to find out why students drop out of high school, but why students graduate. The study will be examining variables or combinations of variables that increase a student's chance of success or can be used as predictors of future success. With this knowledge, dropout prevention programs can be created that affect a student's decision to complete high

school. Through the implementation of programs aimed at encouraging students to stay in school, the dropout rate in Mississippi can be reduced to the goal by 2019.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in conducting this study:

1. Male subjects who attended Meridian Public Schools were typical of all male students from a low socio-economic urban setting during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years.
2. Subjects of the study were typical of the population.

Limitations

The following limitations existed for this study:

1. Variables such as peer group membership could not be controlled in the group.
2. Instructional delivery could not be controlled in the group.
3. Self-reported information was the only data gathered to link common variables.
4. No instrument could be identified to measure the variables addressed in this study.

Definition of Terms

The following operational definitions adapted from the National Center for Educational Statistics and the U.S. Department of Education were used in this study (NCES, 2007):

1. Dropout: An individual who (a) was enrolled in school during the previous year, (b) was not enrolled at the beginning of the current school year, (c) did not graduate or complete a state- or district-approved program in place of graduation, (d) did not

- transfer to a private school, state- or district-approved education program, die, get suspended, or have a temporary school-approved illness, and (e) was not accounted for on October 1 of the current school year (NCES, 2007).
2. School Completer: An individual who graduated from his school or completed a state- or district-approved education program (i.e. GED program, special education such as receipt of a Certificate of Completion or Occupational Diploma) (NCES, 2007).
 3. Graduate: A student who graduated from a public or nonpublic high school with a high school diploma (NCES, 2007).
 4. Risk factor: Student characteristics or measures of past school performance thought to be associated with future dropping out (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002).

Summary

Chapter I has defined the problem and provided the rationale for this study. The assumptions, and limitations for this study were provided. In the second chapter, related research and literature will be reviewed for the ten variables. Literature related to the selection of the sample will be presented. Chapter III addresses the sampling, the procedures, the instrument, and the statistical analysis utilized in this research. The fourth chapter will present an analysis of the data which will be used to reject or retain the null hypotheses. In the fifth chapter, the study will be summarized, conclusions will be drawn from the study, implications of those conclusions will be offered, and recommendations for further research will be offered.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

Introduction

This study will examine the factors that are linked to male students from a low socio-economic urban setting completing high school. Little research has been identified to determine which factors or combinations of factors are positively correlated with high school graduation. In this chapter, the researcher will review the ten variables addressed in this study in terms of the linkages between the variables and current dropout data. Each factor will be addressed separately, and where appropriate, combined with other factors which seem to be linked to greater risk for becoming a high school dropout.

The factors will be divided into two broad categories: risk factors for high school dropout and early intervention to prevent high school dropout. This chapter will first address factors which are associated with high risk for being a high school dropout. The discussion of risk factors which are linked to high school dropout will address the reasoning for selecting a group of male students from a low socio-economic urban educational setting. The next section will address the need for early identification of these factors or characteristics in students. Finally, this chapter will address early intervention efforts to prevent high school dropout. This is the second category for the factors addressed in the study.

High School Dropout as a Process

There is a general belief among researchers that dropping out of high school is not an event with a single cause. Research indicates that dropping out is a culmination of risk factors that build over time (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). The process may be due to any number of risk factors which cause poor adjustment to the educational process (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001). Students may be well adjusted to school but simply not engaged in the educational process to such an extent that they see a reason to continue (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). Students may dropout as a result of feeling misunderstood or stereotyped as a culture (Bemak, Chi-Ying, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005). Regardless of the process, the outcome is the same. Another student becomes a dropout statistic and faces an uncertain future in the job market.

Since dropping out is a process rather than an isolated event, schools have more time to intervene with potential dropouts. To do so, schools must become equipped to predict or identify students who are at-risk (Cairns, Cairns, & Neckerman, 1989). The pattern of risk factors does allow for a degree of predictability in identifying potential dropouts (Cairns et al.). Potential dropouts begin to exhibit risk factors related to family at birth and related to academics as early as first grade (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001). In order to identify potential dropouts, risk factors must be determined which will identify students for early intervention. Educators must be trained to identify the potential risk factors and implement appropriate early interventions to encourage students to stay in school.

Risk Factors for High School Dropout

According to Hammond, Linton, Smink, and Drew (2007), “there is no single factor that can be used to accurately predict who is at risk of dropping out” (p. 1). There are several domains from which risk factors can be drawn: individual, family, school, and community (Hammond et al.). Effective risk factors are those which allow schools to identify as many potential dropouts as possible (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). For the purposes of this study, risk factors from the individual, family, and school domains will be addressed.

In the individual and family domains, a multitude of factors may contribute to being at risk for dropping out of school. The demographic characteristics which are described as risk factors in the individual or family domains include race, ethnicity, family configuration, parental education, limited English proficiency, gender, socio-economic status, sibling educational attainment, parent educational attainment, and truancy (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Net Industries, 2008; Nowicki, Jr., Duke, Sisney, Strickler, & Tyler, 2004).

According to *The Silent Epidemic*, “The dropout epidemic in the United States disproportionately affects young people who are low-income, minority, urban, single-parent children attending large, public schools in the inner city” (Bridgeland et al., 2006a, p. 1). These risk factors were considered when selecting the population and sample for this research study. Factors related to the selection of the population and sample fall into the individual domain including gender, educational environment, and socio-economic status.

Gender

Current research in the area of dropout prevention and risk factors indicates that male students are at a higher risk for becoming high school dropouts. Dropout rates are higher for males than females when all other risk factors are held constant (Alexander et al., 1997; Cairns et al., 1989; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004; Net Industries, 2008). However, there is only a slight difference in the graduation rates of males and females (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). Temple, Reynolds, & Miedel (2000) found that female students were more likely to continue school than male students when facing risk factors for becoming a high school dropout.

While the research indicates that males dropout more than females, there does not seem to be a single reason for that trend. Male students drop out because they become more disengaged from school than females (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). Male students drop out to help at home or to get a job at a higher rate than female students (Bridgeland et al.). Female students drop out more often due to pregnancy rather than work (Bridgeland et al.). Regardless of the reasons that members of a certain gender drop out of school, research is clear that male students are at a higher risk than females for dropping out of school (Alexander et al., 1997; Bridgeland et al.; Cairns et al., 1989; Lehr et al., 2004; Net Industries, 2008; Temple et al., 2000). For that reason, the sample for this study was only male students so that factors may be identified which will encourage them to finish school.

Educational Setting

Another risk factor which falls into the individual domain is the educational setting. Certain schools in certain areas have higher dropout rates than the rest of the country. Dropout rates are higher in urban schools than in schools in rural or suburban areas (Bemak et al., 2005; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Lehr et al., 2004; Net Industries, 2008). This may be related to the poverty level in urban areas since dropouts are more likely to come from poor areas (Bemak et al.). The students may not be at greater risk for dropping out as a result of attending an urban school but because they live in poverty (Temple et al., 2000). Research indicates that the two factors go together in determining risk for dropout potential in a student (Temple et al.).

There is another aspect of educational setting that research has indicated should be considered when determining potential risk factors for high school drop out. Dropout rates within the United States have been shown to vary according to geographic location. Schools in the South have higher dropout rates than schools in other parts of the county (Lerh et al., 2004). Dropout rates are higher in secondary schools in Mississippi than in many other states in the United States (Lan & Lanthier, 2003). The population and the sample for this study reflect the greater need for additional research into the reasons students from urban areas or the South are more likely to drop out of high school.

Socio-economic Status

According to Fitzpatrick & Yoels (1992), socio-economic status has consistently been an effective predictor of high school dropout. Socio-economic status is measured in multiple ways in different studies on the subject of high school dropouts. According to

Gleason and Dynarski (2002), socio-economic status is not only related to family income, it is related to the educational level of the parents. The relationship between the parental income and parental educational attainment can have a positive or negative impact on the likelihood of a student dropping out (Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter, & Dornbusch, 1990). Parents who have attained a higher degree of education generally receive a higher income, and their children are more likely to graduate from high school (Rumberger et al.). Alexander et al. (1997) suggest that socio-economic status is based on parental educational attainment, parent employment status, and whether or not a student receives reduced price or free meals at school.

Socio-economic status, which according to Ensminger & Slusarcick (1992) was once measured by race or being a minority, is now measured primarily by class. Socio-economic status is a combination of where a student lives, educational attainment of their parents, parental income, and multiple individual characteristics.

Historically, students from disadvantaged backgrounds have had the highest drop out rates (Rumberger et al., 1990). Students from families with a low annual income or low socio-economic status are more likely leave school prematurely than students with a middle or high socio-economic status (Alexander et al., 1997; Ensminger & Slusarcick; 1992; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Lehr et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 1999; McNeal, 1997; Suh & Suh, 2007; Temple et al., 2000). Students with a low socio-economic status are likely categorized as being poor or living in poverty (Temple et al.). Twenty percent of dropouts are receiving Aid to Families with Dependant Children or welfare assistance (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999).

When reviewing drop out rates based on socio-economic status, it is important to compare the educational attainment of students from different socio-economic groups and to clearly define what is interpreted as socio-economic status. As compared to other groups, students with an above average or average socio-economic status are more likely to be high school completers than students with a low socio-economic status (Cairns et al., 1989). The drop out rate for students was identified in one study as 25% as compared to 13% and 8% in the middle and high socio-economic groups respectively (Nowicki, Jr. et al., 2004). Nationally, the average drop out rate of 11% in 2005 increased to 14% for students living in poverty (Bemak et al., 2005). A 1999 study conducted by Goldschmidt and Wang found that youth in low income families are twice as likely as those in middle income families and five times as likely as youth in high income families to drop out of high school prior to graduation. The median family income for families of dropouts is \$22,000 a years lower than that of families of high school graduates (Lunenburg, 1999). The impact of poverty on educational attainment begins as early as first grade and can be used at that point as a predictor of high school graduation (Ensminger & Slusarick, 1992).

The socio-economic status of a student's neighborhood and school also can play a critical role in the success or failure of a student in high school. Regardless of the socio-economic status of an individual student, those students living in poor neighborhoods are more likely to dropout than students living in wealthier neighborhoods (Gleason & Dynarksi, 2002). A student with a low family income has a better chance of being a high school graduate if he or she lives in a middle income or wealthy neighborhood (Gleason & Dynarksi). This is because students who grow up in very poor neighborhoods and are

surrounded by dropouts are more likely to imitate the behavior of those in their neighborhood (Gleason & Dynarski). Students who live in a neighborhood where residents routinely earn high school diplomas are more likely to imitate that behavior (Gleason & Dynarski). This is true both of the socio-economic status of the community and the school (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). The average income and educational level of a school and neighborhood can have a potentially positive or negative impact on the educational attainment of the high school age residents (Goldschmidt & Wang).

Researchers attribute the impact of socio-economic status to several factors. Parents who have a higher socio-economic status are more likely to be involved in their child's education and promote high school completion than those who have a lower socio-economic status (Rumberger et al., 1990). Those parents have more social capital to offer their children in the form of time spent pursuing educational activities and activities that promote thinking skills (Rumberger et al.). Those parents with higher socio-economic status seem to teach their children to aspire toward higher educational attainment (Rumberger et al.).

Since current and historical research agrees that the socio-economic status is an effective predictor of a student's potential to drop out, it was a consideration in this study. All students selected for the study are all from families with low socio-economic levels as measured by receiving government assistance in the form of free or reduced lunch. These students were at greater risk for becoming high school drop outs. However, they decided to remain in school due to a variety of variables. The purpose of this research is to determine those variables.

Family Configuration

Family configuration refers to who students live with during their school age years. There are several alternative family configurations. Students may live with both biological parents, grandparents, one biological parent, a biological parent and a grandparent, or many other family variations. For the purposes of this study, family configuration will be limited to living with two parents (biological parents, grandparents, or step-parents) or living with one parent (biological, foster, adoptive, or grandparent). This follows much of the current research in dropout prevention which finds a difference between students from dual parent families and those from single-parent families. Fitzgerald (1990) found in a survey of secondary teachers that 39% of the teachers believed that family configuration was an indicator of students who were at risk for leaving school prematurely.

Researchers agree that students who come from single parent homes are at greater risk for becoming high school dropouts (Fitzpatrick & Yoels, 1992; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Lehr et al., 2004; McNeal, 1997). Conversely, a higher percentage of high school graduates live with two parents (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001). The only group of students based on family configuration that met or exceeded the national graduation average of 89% in 2005 was the group with both natural parents (Lamm, Harder, Lamm, Rose, & Rask, 2005). The effect of family configuration has been shown to be an indicator of future dropout as early as first grade (Alexander et al., 1997).

Research indicates that there are several reasons that family configuration, specifically coming from a single parent family, may impact the likelihood of high school graduation. First, single parent families are more likely to live in poverty due to having only one income (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). There is a reduction in social capital based on the presence of only one adult in the household (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996). Social capital refers to the amount of time the adults have to spend with children or performing child related activities such as visiting school (Teachman et al.). According to Teachman et al., single parents living in poverty generally spend less time with their children and are less likely to contact schools concerning their children's educations. Students may be affected by the manner in which the parent came to be a single parent. The risk for becoming high school drop outs increases in students who have suffered through a divorce (Nowicki, Jr. et al., 2004). Students who are dealing with the death of caretaker or the divorce of their parents are more likely to drop out as a result of emotional stress during that time (Yauman, 1991). They may feel a responsibility to get a job or help take care of the remaining caregiver and their siblings (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). This may explain why students from single parent households are more likely to drop out during high school rather than earlier in their educational careers (Goldschmidt & Wang).

Regardless of the culmination of factors involved with family configuration which positively or negatively a student's likelihood of graduating from high school, it is clear that family configuration does make a difference. However, some students seem to

overcome negative effects of growing up in a single parent family. Therefore, it is not the only deciding factor concerning the potential a student has for high school graduation.

Parental Employment

Parental employment is another risk factor associated with high school drop out. It is related to the socio-economic status of the student and his or her family. Based on research on the impact of socio-economic status of dropouts, it is obvious that student from families with a lower income or living in poverty are more likely to drop out of high school prior to graduation (Alexander et al., 1997; Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Lan & Lanthier, 2003; Lehr et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 1999; McNeal, 1997; Suh & Suh, 2007; Temple et al., 2000).

According to Lehr et al. (2004), high school dropouts are more likely to come from families where one or both parents are unemployed. In areas with a high unemployment rate, there is a corresponding high rate of high school dropout (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992). It is not simply unemployment that impacts risk for high school dropout. The job level of a parent can impact the likelihood of dropping out of high school (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001; Lunenburg, 1999). Most dropouts come from families where the parents are either unemployed or have a low status job (Barrington & Hendricks; Lunenburg). The parents generally work in jobs requiring manual labor or in the service industry where they receive minimum wage (Barrington & Hendricks; Lunenburg). Therefore, these students are from a family with a low socio-economic status.

Children of unemployed parents generally grow up in a community or context where there are not many available jobs (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992). They find that education does not seem to make a positive difference in a person's ability to get a job (Barrington & Hendricks, 2001; Lunenburg, 1999). High school diplomas are not a requirement for the jobs, so they are not important to the students (Barrington & Hendricks; Lunenburg). The students become more alienated from school as a result of knowing that having a diploma will not promise them a paycheck or keep them out of poverty (Barrington & Hendricks; Lunenburg).

Parental employment is a risk factor for high school dropout based on its relationship to the socio-economic level of the student, community, and school. That relationship results in a culmination of risk factors that make a student more likely to drop out of high school. Another aspect of this relationship is the educational attainment of the parent.

Parental Educational Attainment

Parental educational level is also referred to as human capital (Teachman et al., 2000). Human capital refers to the knowledge and skills parents bring into the parent-child relationship and impart to the child (Teachman et al.). Parental educational attainment is a significant risk factor for high school drop out based on its relationship to family socio-economic status and parental employment.

Family income, family socio-economic status, parental employment, and parental educational attainment are all related to dropping out of high school (Gleason & Dynarksi, 2002). Low parental educational attainment has been shown in one study as a

reason that students with a low socio-economic status drop out of high school (Suh & Suh, 2007). Students who continue in school and graduate are more likely to have parents with a high school diploma or higher (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Temple et al., 2000). Fitzgerald (1990) found that 31% of teachers believed that parent educational attainment was related to student successful completion of high school.

Less educated parents are associated with higher dropout rates (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999; Lunenburg, 1999; Nowicki, Jr. et al, 2004). A student whose father dropped out of school is 1.4 times more likely to dropout himself when compared to a student whose father has at least a high school diploma (Goldschmidt & Wang). Having a mother who graduated from high school also increases the potential for a student to earn a high school diploma (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992).

Middle school dropout rates decrease directly with the percentage of parents who have earned at least a high school diploma (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). High school dropouts increase directly with the percentage of parents who do not have at least a high school education (Goldschmidt & Wang). The effects of parent educational attainment are more pronounced in high school than in middle school (Goldschmidt & Wang). This is related to socio-economic status and to students who leave school to earn money to help their families (Bridgeland et al., 2006a).

The relationship between socio-economic status, family configuration, parental employment, and parental educational attainment is clearly shown in literature. All four factors work together and often culminate in a student choosing to leave school prior to

graduation. It is far easier for a student to overcome one of the factors. However, a student facing all four factors may feel powerless to change his or her future.

Sibling Educational Attainment

Literature concerning the impact of sibling educational attainment is limited. Research does indicate that students whose siblings have dropped out of high school are more likely to drop out of high school as well (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). This appears to be related to the community and the home in which the student lives (Gleason & Dynarski). Students who live in a home with a sibling who has dropped out are more likely to drop out because of the example they see (Gleason & Dynarski). The actions of parents when an older sibling attempts to drop out will effect the thinking of a younger child about the possible parental reaction to his or her own decision to leave school (Gleason & Dynarski). While little definitive research was found on this factor, research has shown sibling educational attainment to be a risk factor of potential high school dropout (Gleason & Dynarski; Goldschmidt & Wang).

Health/Attendance

One of the strongest predictors of high school drop out is attendance. Students' rates of attendance are effective indicators of high school success (Lehr et al., 2004). A high rate of truancy is positively correlated with dropping out of high school (Ensminger & Slusarcick, 1992; Gleason & Dynarski, 2002; Rumberger et al., 1990). It is not the attendance during the last year a student attends school that is important. It is the pattern of attendance. Generally, dropping out occurs after a pattern of chronic tardiness and

poor attendance (Villarreal & Rodriguez, 2007). The pattern also escalates in number of absences per year, frequency of absences, and number of days missed each time (Lunenburg, 1999).

Since absenteeism in dropouts is a chronic and escalating pattern, it is important to address absenteeism in middle school. In one study, Gleason & Dynarski (2002) found that the risk factor associated with the highest dropout rates was high absenteeism in middle school. In a previous study, Barrington & Hendricks (2001) found that high absenteeism in middle school was a predictive risk factor for early identification of potential high school dropouts. Goldschmidt and Wang (1999) found that the middle school mean dropout rate decreased as attendance increased. This is true in high school as well (Goldschmidt & Wang). The pattern of attendance begins in middle school (Goldschmidt & Wang).

It is important to trace attendance patterns in potential dropouts for several reasons. Eighty-seven percent of teachers who participated in a survey felt that excess absenteeism was a strongly predictive risk factor for potential high school dropout (Fitzgerald, 1990). While the feelings of teachers on the subject are important and accurate, the dropouts themselves addressed absenteeism as a risk factor in *The Silent Epidemic* (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). In a survey of dropouts, 43% of the respondents dropped out of school because they had missed too many days and felt that they could not catch up enough to successfully complete that grade (Bridgeland et al.). Some of those students began to miss school in middle school and could not catch up enough to pass

(Bridgeland et al.). In high school, the absences began to impact their academic performance to a point that catching up was not an option (Bridgeland et al.).

Of the risk factors addressed in this study, this is the first one that can be changed. The other factors discussed to this point have been fixed characteristics of the individual or the family. Attendance is a risk factor for which interventions can be planned and implemented. Also, attendance is a risk factor that shows a process of disengagement from school. Lack of participation in extracurricular activities is another such risk factor.

Extracurricular Activity Participation

Lack of participation in extracurricular activities is not considered to be a risk factor for high school dropout. Lack of participation in sports and extracurricular activities is a warning sign that a student is becoming disengaged from school. This disengagement is a significant risk factor for high school drop out. Extracurricular activity participation will be addressed from this framework.

According to Villarreal & Rodriguez (2007), dropping out of high school is a gradual process of disengagement from the educational setting. Extracurricular activities play a vital role in the process of engagement. Students who are engaged in school are more academically resilient (Nowicki, Jr. et al., 2004). Engagement in school can be accomplished through affiliation with groups and through social events (Nowicki, Jr. et al.). Both group affiliation and socialization occur in the context of extracurricular activity participation.

Research confirms that participation in extracurricular activities, especially sports, increases engagement and reduced the risk of dropping out (Lan & Lanthier, 2003).

Those students participating in school activities outside the realm of the classroom curriculum are more likely to earn a high school diploma (Curtin, Ingels, Wu, & Heuer, 2002). This engagement in school led to greater resilience in students which significantly lowered the dropout rate for low socio-economic minority children (Nowicki, Jr. et al., 2004). Low participation in sports and extracurricular activities is a factor associated with high dropout rates (Lehr et al., 2004).

Lack of participation may have been a constant condition for a student or may have been an aspect of the process of disengagement. According to Lan and Lanthier (2003), part of the disengagement process that dropouts go through is ceasing participation in activities they feel tie them to the school. This disengagement process increases over the last two years a dropout attends school (Lan & Lanthier). During the process, the student knowingly alienates him or herself from all school activities and may display attendance problems (Lan & Lanthier). The dropouts disengaged from everything associated with school before they quit participating in extracurricular activities (Lan & Lanthier). They continued to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities even after they developed negative feelings toward the school and their teachers (Lan & Lanthier).

According to some research, teachers notice the disengagement of students and feel that it is a risk factor for dropout. Fifty-six percent of teacher surveyed by Fitzgerald (1990) felt that disengagement from or lack of participation in sports or extracurricular activities was a risk factor for potential high school dropout. It is a risk factor that can be

addressed with interventions rather than a fixed risk factor that cannot be addressed by dropout prevention programs.

Groups of Risk Factors

Each risk factor has an impact on potential high school dropouts. A student is at much higher risk for becoming a high school dropout when they have more than one risk factor. Students with one risk factor have a 17.1% dropout rate (Suh & Suh, 2007). That increases to 32.5% when a student experiences two drop out risk factors (Suh & Suh). The drop out rate increases to 47.7% for students who exhibit three risk factors (Suh & Suh). A combination of two or more risk factors in a student increases the likelihood that the student will drop out of school significantly (Suh & Suh). The highest dropout rates are found among students who have four or more risk factors (Suh & Suh). Students with several risk factors experience a culmination of problems that become overwhelming as they build over an extended period of time (Alexander et al., 1997; Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). In one study, Alexander et al. found that male students of a low socioeconomic status with a relatively large number of siblings and a young mother who was the only parent present were at an extremely high risk for dropping out of school. Students with a multiple risk factors are at a much higher risk for dropping out of high school (Alexander et al.; Goldschmidt & Wang).

These combinations of predictive risk factors point to a need for early intervention in order to help the student to be successful. Research shows that as students accumulate multiple risk factors, they become increasingly more likely to drop out of school (Suh & Suh, 2007). At the point in their educational career where the factors have built up,

prevention programs are less likely to be successful because students are less motivated (Suh & Suh). Intervention programs must begin early enough to address the risk factors and help the student to be academically successful.

Need for Early Identification

Early intervention to prevent high school dropout is one of the most often cited strategies in research (Suh & Suh, 2007). In order for students to benefit from early intervention, they must be identified early in their educational careers. Students must be identified as soon as they develop risk factors (Suh & Suh). Since many risk factors are related to family and demographic background, those factors can be identified at birth. They can and should be addressed by educators as early as pre-school. Fortunately, in a survey conducted by Fitzgerald (1990), 97% of teachers felt that they were either somewhat or very knowledgeable concerning identification of risk factors related to student dropout. Suh and Suh identified a need for identification and intervention early because high school interventions are too late for most students. The process of disengagement had gone too far to halt the progress (Suh & Suh).

Early Intervention and Dropout Prevention

Intervention must begin early in a student's educational career in order to be successful (Fuerst & Fuerst, 1993). As students accumulate more risk factors, intervention programs are less likely to be successful (Suh & Suh, 2007). Intervention programs should, therefore, target younger students who have accumulated fewer risk factors (Suh & Suh). In one drop out prevention study, Temple et al. (2002), found that

students who were identified as being at risk, but continued their education, participated in some type of intervention program relative early in their academic careers. If intervention had not been attempted until high school, the students would have likely become high school dropouts (Suh & Suh).

Educators must identify students using the correct risk factors. Even the best intervention programs will be unsuccessful in decreasing the drop out rate if they identify students who are not likely to drop out (Gleason & Dynarski, 2002). The intervention program must address risk factors that can be controlled and changed. Interventions cannot address parental educational attainment, family configuration, educational setting, gender, or socio-economic status. These risk factors are fixed. They should be used to determine which students should be targeted for early intervention programs (Fitzpatrick & Yoels, 1992). Intervention programs must address the disengagement process and the causes of it (Lehr et al., 2004).

Successful intervention programs are designed to deal with the core issues that cause student alienation and disengagement from school (Lehr et al., 2004). A quality intervention program will teach students skills and strategies that can be used to meet the academic, behavioral, and psychological demands of attending school (Lehr et al.).

Intervention programs should address every aspect of home and school which could cause a student to leave school prematurely. They should provide parents with training on how to become more involved in their child's education (Villarreal & Rodriguez, 2007). This aspect of the intervention process helps to foster positive relationships between student, the school staff, families, and the community (Villarreal &

Rodriguez). Group counseling for students undergoing familial changes or traumatic situations at home can help to alleviate the impact of risk factors related to stress (Bemak et al., 2005; Yauman, 1991). Interventions can also address instructional quality and delivery through tutoring (Lehr et al., 2004). Quality interventions address disengagement by encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports in order to build a sense of belonging (Lehr et al.). Programs like this increase student success, and with it the likelihood that students will stay in school (Lehr et al.).

Early intervention for the purpose of reducing the drop out rate encompasses a number of drop out prevention strategies. Those strategies can include preschool participation, tutoring, vocational program participation, participation in faith based organizations, and participation in extracurricular activities. Each will be reviewed in detail to explain possible benefits for potential dropouts.

Preschool Participation

Two studies have been vital in documenting the importance of preschool education: High Scope/Perry Preschool Project and the Chicago Longitudinal Study. Both indicate benefits for students who participate. They give statistical evidence that preschool participation can help to reduce the drop out rate and alleviate some of the risk factors for high school drop out.

The High Scope/Perry Preschool Program was implemented in Ypsilanti, Michigan in the mid 1960's (Schweinhart, Barnes, Weikart, Barnett, & Epstein, 1993). It was conducted with a sample of low income African American students beginning at preschool age (Schweinhart et al.). The students were tracked throughout high school and

into post high school education or the workforce (Schweinhart et al.). The students who participated in preschool showed a 34% reduction in the drop out rate as compared to students who did not participate in preschool education (Schweinhart et al.).

The Chicago Longitudinal Study also indicated statistically that preschool participation had a positive impact on graduation rates in Chicago (Temple et al., 2000). Students were tracked from preschool until they reached their early twenties (Temple et al.). It was found that students who continued in school were more likely to have participated in a preschool program (Temple et al.). Preschool participation was associated with a decrease in the dropout rate from 29% to 22% in students at risk for becoming high school dropouts (Temple et al.).

Both studies are longitudinal and therefore offer evidence concerning the impact of preschool education on the drop out rate. Both studies indicate that participation in preschool decreases the chance that a student will leave school prematurely. Preschool is an appropriate and effective early intervention method for urban students at risk for high school drop out (Schweinhart et al., 1993; Temple et al., 2000).

Tutoring

Another possible intervention for students at high risk for high school dropout is an intensive tutoring program. Once potential dropouts have been identified, it is important to determine the academic areas in which the students are struggling (Lehr et al., 2004). They need increased time with a tutor and one-on-one instruction in areas in which they are struggling academically (Lunenburg, 1999; Net Industries, 2008). The tutoring should supplement current instruction and provide intensive practice on the skills

needed to be successful in current instruction (Villarreal & Rodriguez, 2007). They should also include provisions for behavioral interventions for those students who receive a high number of office referrals (Lehr et al.). These types of interventions increase the quality of instruction that students receive (Lehr et al.). Through tutoring, students are likely to see success and therefore stay in school (Lehr et al.).

Vocational Participation

For some students, participation in vocational programs is an early intervention strategy (Net Industries, 2008). Participation in vocational education gives at risk students the opportunity to prepare for college or the work force (Villarreal & Rodriguez, 2007). According to Lehr et al. (2004), interventions should address career or job related learning activities. Job related learning activities include vocational education which has an occupational concentration (Lehr et al.).

Students seem to agree with researchers that occupational learning through vocational programs is an effective intervention strategy. In *The Silent Epidemic*, eighty-one percent of the dropouts surveyed indicated that they thought vocational learning opportunities would have helped them (Bridgeland et al., 2006a). They felt that real world learning in the form of internships and service learning would have increased their interest in school and their chances for graduation (Bridgeland et al.).

Vocational education is seen by both educators and students as a possible effective deterrent for high school drop out. It helps students to see real worked applications for the work they are doing and school. They can learn a trade or skill that

may help them with future employment. Vocational education may encourage some students to stay in school to earn a high school diploma.

Faith Based Organization Participation

Some parents have accepted faith based organizations as a form of drop out intervention. Research shows that religious affiliation can help lower the drop out rate (Lehrer, 2006). In general, students who attend religious private schools have a lower drop out rate than those in public school (Goldschmidt & Wang, 1999). Students in Catholic schools are significantly less likely to drop out of high school (Goldschmidt & Wang; Teachman et al., 1996). The impact of religion on education is measured in terms of both affiliation and participation (Lehrer).

Prior research has shown that both religious affiliation and religious participation are correlated with the number of years of school completed (Lehrer, 2006). Affiliation is the process of being a member of or belonging to a religious group (Lehrer). As far as religious affiliation, the denomination with which students are affiliated seems to impact high school completion (Lehrer). Conservative Protestants, Mormons, and students who are not affiliated with a religion are less likely to earn a diploma than mainline Protestants (Lehrer). Conservative Protestants and unaffiliated students have the highest dropout rates when compared with other denominations (Lehrer). Affiliation is either positively or negatively correlated with high school completion depending on religious denomination.

The other aspect of involvement in faith based organizations that can have a positive or negative impact on high school graduation, and therefore the drop out rate, is

participation. Religious participation involves the number of times or number of activities a student is involved in that are faith based (Lehrer, 2006). High levels of participation in faith based organizations are positively correlated with high school completion (Lehrer). Frequent attendance at religious services at the age of 14 is positively associated with high school graduation (Lehrer). This correlation is most pronounced for disadvantaged youth from minority or urban backgrounds (Williams, & Warner, 2001). These youth most likely have limited access to non-religious support groups or resources (Williams & Warner). Religious involvement seems to have a positive impact on the risk factors for high school dropout for a multitude of reasons.

Religious involvement has a positive impact on the high school drop out rate for several reasons. Involvement in faith based organizations help students to build the ability to engage in productive activities such as school (Lehrer, 2006). Religion also fosters community engagement in students (Williams & Warner, 2001). They learn to develop a collective identity which is transferable into an educational setting (Williams & Warner). In addition to the community building aspects of involvement in religion, students benefit on a personal level. Faith based activities help students to develop a positive sense of self and a personal identity (Williams & Warner). Religious involvement helps students to develop personal boundaries (Williams & Warner).

Involvement in faith based organizations can be considered an intervention for high school dropout since it helps students to deal with risk factors. Students learn to become engaged in an activity or a group. They learn to set boundaries and to work with

other people. These aspects of religion encourage affiliated and participating students to graduate from high school.

Extracurricular Activity Participation

The prior information concerning extracurricular activity participation in high school demonstrated through research that extracurricular activities help to stem student disengagement from school. This section addresses what research says about the effectiveness of extracurricular activities as an intervention. Rather than focusing on lack of participation as a risk factor, the focus is on participation as an intervention.

According to Villarreal & Rodriguez (2007), participation in sports or extracurricular activities gives students a sense of being supported by a team or group and by the school. Some of those students feel a sense of belonging to the school and being valued by the school for the first time (Lehr et al., 2004). Participation helps to build social skills and promote self-worth in students as well (Villarreal & Rodriguez). Extracurricular activities give students a place to excel in school outside the academic realm of education (Villarreal & Rodriguez).

All of these aspects of extracurricular activities address risk factors for high school dropout. They help students to engage in the educational process outside the classroom. Potential dropouts find success and value at school by finding something in which they can excel. For those reasons, extracurricular activities are potentially effective intervention strategies for preventing high school drop out.

Summary

The review of research and literature demonstrates that there are many risk factors associated with high school dropout. These risk factors can and should be identified as early as possible so that interventions have a greater opportunity to be successful. Early intervention is the only proven method of dropout prevention documented in current research. Early intervention occurs through many forms. Regardless of the particular method of intervention or prevention employed, high school drop out is a significant issue that is addressed in both public policy and educational research. It is an epidemic that has serious repercussions for the American educational system and the American public.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The purpose of this research was to examine the factors that lead to successful high school completion of male students in an urban educational environment. The research seeks to identify commonalities among the members of the sample in order to generalize them to a larger group of at-risk students. While research exists detailing the reasons students choose to drop out of school, the factors that lead to successful graduation from high school have yet to be determined. This research addresses that gap by attempting to examine factors and relationships between factors which predispose students to complete high school.

This chapter describes the methodology and procedures used to conduct this study. This chapter includes the following sections: research design, variables of the study, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

The design for this study is the correlative ex post facto design. Correlational studies attempt to establish or verify possible relationships among two or more variables with no attempt to change or influence any of the variables (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Correlational studies compare the variables present in a group to explain how two or more of the variables are related or vary together. Creswell (2002) states, “correlational

designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators use a correlational statistical technique to describe and measure the degree of association (or relationship) between or among variables or sets of data”. (p.59) Since, this study examined the relationships among ten variables which may predict successful high school completion by male students from an urban, low socio-economic background, a correlational design is the logical and appropriate research design for this study.

This study addresses two research questions: (a) are there common factors among male students from a low socio-economic urban setting which predispose them to successful high school completion and (b) what are the common factors among male students from a low socio-economic urban setting which predispose them to successful high school completion?

Variables of the Study

The dependent variable in this study was successful completion of high school. Participants in the study were selected based on the following control variables: gender (male), socio-economic status (low SES), and school setting (urban). The independent variables for this study were the factors that are addressed in the study: preschool education participation, participation in sports/extracurricular activities, presence of a nuclear family, participation in faith-based organizations, educational level of parents, number of other children from the family who have previously completed high school, attendance and related health issues, employment of parents, participation in vocational studies, and presence of a tutoring program for high stakes exit exams.

Population and Sample

The initial population for this study consisted of male students who were graduated from Meridian Public Schools during the 2005-2006 and the 2006-2007 school years and received assistance in the form of the free or reduced lunch program. From this population of 240 male students from a low socio-economic urban background, a sample of eighty participants was randomly selected. The first forty students who were located from this sample were administered the survey.

Instrumentation

No current instrument was identified that measures all the variables addressed in this study. The information found in the review of related literature and research indicated that the variables were appropriate for this study. An instrument was created and piloted by this researcher for the purposes of obtaining information on the variables defined as being important factors in high school completion.

In order to increase the validity and reliability of a self-created instrument, the researcher used or adapted items from valid and reliable instruments. The items on the survey were adapted from items found on the Education Longitudinal study of 2002: Student Questionnaire Base Year. This survey is administered by the National Center for Educational Statistics. Additional items were adapted from the reporting categories found in the National Center for Educational Statistics Common Core of Data Local Education Agency-Level Public-Use Data File on Public School Dropouts.

The 30-item “Successful High School Completion Survey” was administered to the participants within two years of high school completion and sought information in all

ten of the independent variable areas (Appendix C). Each of the ten variables was addressed by three separate questions. Each question varied slightly from the other two addressing that variable. The three questions were randomly placed throughout the survey so that they did not immediately precede one another. Questions were asked in opposite manners in order insure that participants read the questions carefully. Participants were asked to respond to the thirty items by selecting either “yes” or “no” to indicate the presence or absence of that particular variable in their lives during the years they were attending high school.

In order to test the consistency of the responses to the multiple items on the survey measuring the same variable, a pilot study was conducted. According to Gay and Airasian (2000), a pilot study is similar to a “dress rehearsal” prior to opening day or beginning the actual study (p. 111). The goal was to “identify unanticipated problems” (p.111). The pilot study was utilized to predict and correct any potential problems with items on the survey that need to be corrected prior to beginning the study.

In conducting the pilot study, five individuals who had completed high school were given the survey and an explanation for the research being conducted. They were asked to complete the survey and return it to the researcher. The participants needed approximately 15 to 30 minutes to read the letter of explanation and complete the survey. After the surveys were returned to the researcher, the responses to the three questions addressing each of the ten variables were analyzed in order to determine that like questions were answered in like manners. For example, all questions pertaining to presence of a nuclear family would indicate either the presence of or absence of such a

family. The responses to the three questions concerning presence of a nuclear family should not contradict one another.

After each of the five participants in the pilot study had returned their surveys, the researcher interviewed them individually. They were asked to identify any items on the survey that were unclear or confusing. They were also asked to identify any aspects of the explanation of the study or the survey directions which needed clarification prior to conducting the actual study. Based on the analysis of the surveys completed and the interviews conducted during the pilot study, the researcher found that revisions to the instrument, instructions, or explanation of the study were not indicated.

Data Collection

Permission was granted from the Mississippi State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research and the superintendent of Meridian Public Schools to obtain the information needed to determine the population and select the sample for the study (Appendices A & C). A list of all graduates from the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years was obtained from Meridian Public Schools. Two lists were given to the researcher. One list contained the addresses and phone numbers of the graduates. This list was sorted to exclude all female graduates.

The second list contained free and reduced lunch status for the graduates. The list was used to link graduates with the amount paid for breakfast and lunch during their senior year of high school. This list was used to exclude graduates who paid full price for lunch. The final list of 240 graduates contained only male students who received assistance in the form of free and reduced lunch. This list was the population for the

study. A sample of eighty students was randomly selected from this list using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 Statistical Software Package. Using the addresses and phone numbers provided by Meridian Public Schools, they were contacted for participation in the study.

Upon making contact with each participant of the study, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participant and answered any questions the participant had. The researcher asked each participant to complete an informed consent form and provided a copy to the participant to retain. The form had been approved by Mississippi State University's Institutional Review Board and indicated an interest in the factors that predispose students to successfully complete high school (Appendix A). It indicated that participants had been selected based on their successful completion of high school and the information they might be able to share on the subject. Finally, it indicated that participation was voluntary, and that if they elected to participate, they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or repercussions.

Once informed consent was obtained from the participant, the researcher administered the survey to the participant. Participants needed approximately 30 to 45 minutes to read the letter of explanation, the informed consent, and complete the survey. Since the sample for the study was limited to forty participants, once forty participants had been contacted and completed the survey, the remaining possible participants from the random selection of eighty were discarded.

The original 240 subjects were linked to a number for the purposes of randomly sampling eighty possible participants. Those eighty possible participants were linked with

a number indicating what number they were in the random sample. As the surveys were completed, they were coded with another number which was not linked to the subject names in any way. Once data analysis began, the subjects were not linked in any manner to the participants who completed the surveys.

Data Analysis

The data from this study was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 11.0 Statistical Software Package. A descriptive statistical analysis using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations was conducted to analyze each of the independent variables.

To address the research question, the researcher used binomial distribution and Chi-square procedures. Binomial distribution is most commonly used when working with nominal data with two possible observations or responses (Boersman, 2008). Each response has a 50% probability, and half of the respondents should fall into each category. Binomial distribution illustrates the significance of the amount above or below 50% falling into each category and whether it could be attributed to chance. A binomial distribution will be performed on each of the independent variables. Significance in the binomial distributions might indicate that the number of participants reporting a characteristic is related to their successful high school completion.

Additionally, the relationships between the independent variables were analyzed using the Chi-square distribution procedures. The Chi-square procedure is used to compare the frequencies of cells to what the cell frequencies would be if the two variables were independent of one another (Shannon & Davenport, 2001). Each

independent variable was paired with all the other independent variables and analyzed to determine if the commonalities in responses were more frequent than would occur by chance. Significance in the Chi-square procedures may indicate that the independent variables are not truly independent of one another.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to attempt to find correlations among male students from an urban low socio-economic area who graduated from high school. Ten variables were identified through current research as possibly being linked to successful high school completion and were examined as part of this study. The variables addressed in this study were participation in preschool education, participation in sports/extracurricular activities, presence of a nuclear family, participation in faith-based organizations, educational attainment of parents, educational attainment of siblings, attendance, employment of parents, participation in vocational studies, and participation in a tutoring program for high stakes exit exams.

A correlative ex post facto design was employed in conducting this research. This researcher attempted to determine which variables or combinations of variables are statistically linked with completion of high school in an urban context. This chapter will address the results of the statistical testing performed on the data obtained from the surveys completed by study participants.

Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

This study had several control variables including gender, socio-economic status, and attendance in an urban school. Each study participant shared these characteristics.

The participants all shared the dependent variable of successfully completing high school. No statistical analysis was conducted on these variables since they were common to all subjects.

The independent variables in this study were the characteristics which were examined through the use of the survey. Information concerning characteristics shared by high school graduates was gathered from the “Successful High School Completion Survey” (Appendix C). Data was collected from 40 participants (n=40) who were randomly selected from the actual population (N=240).

The independent variables for this study were participation in preschool education, participation in sports/extracurricular activities, presence of a nuclear family, participation in faith-based organizations, educational attainment of parents, educational attainment of siblings, attendance, employment of parents, participation in vocational studies, and participation in a tutoring program for high stakes exit exams. The results of the surveys were entered into an SPSS file. The percent of participants reporting a specific characteristic was first analyzed and are reported in Table 1.

More than half the participants in this study reported the presence of each of the ten variables with the exception of participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. Only 37.5% (n = 15) of participants reported participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. One hundred percent of survey participants reported at least one parent being employed. The majority of participants (n = 39) reported that both parents were employed during their high school years. Ninety-five percent of participants (n = 38) reported participation in a faith based organization and that both parents graduated from high

school. Eighty percent (n = 32) of participants reported having fewer than 10 absences and participating in extracurricular activities. Eighty percent (n = 32) of participants reported not having any older siblings who failed to graduate. Of the study participants, 77.5% (n = 31) reported participating in a preschool program and having both a male and female role model in the home. Seventy-two and one half percent (n = 29) of participants reported participation in vocational education and having parents who attended college. Seventy percent (n = 28) of participants reported participation in high school sports.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Percent</i> “yes”	<i>Percent</i> “no”	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Preschool participation	77.5%	22.5%	1.23	.423
Any older siblings fail to graduate	20%	80%	1.80	.405
Fewer than 10 absences	80%	20%	1.20	.405
Male and female role model in home	77.5%	22.5%	1.23	.423
Faith based organization participation	95%	5%	1.05	.221
Parents attended some college	72.5%	27.5%	1.28	.452
Parents completed high school	95%	5%	1.05	.221
One parent in home employed	100%	0	1.00	.000
Both parents in home employed	97.5%	2.5%	1.03	.158
Vocational program participation	72.5%	27.5%	1.28	.452
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	37.5%	62.5%	1.62	.490
Extracurricular activity participation	80%	20%	1.20	.405
High school sports participation	70%	30%	1.30	.464
Current Sample (n = 40)				

Results for Binomial Distribution

Binomial distribution is used with independent variables which have two mutually exclusive outcomes (Howell, 2002). In this study, each participant reported either “yes” or “no” to possible characteristics. Binomial distribution was employed as a statistical test to determine whether the number of participants reporting each characteristic was greater than what would be expected by chance. The test probability for each

characteristic was .50, or 50% of the participants would report each characteristic by chance. The significance level was set at .05 ($p < 0.05$). The results of the binomial distribution are found in Table 2.

Of the ten characteristics on the survey, nine of them were found to exist in a high percentage of the study participants. The most significant findings were reported in preschool participation, fewer than ten absences, sibling educational attainment, participation in faith-based organizations, parent educational attainment, parent employment, participation in vocational program, participation in extracurricular activities, and participation in high school athletics. The percentage of student who reported participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams (62.5%) was not found to be significant.

Table 2

Binomial Distribution of Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Observed Probability of “Yes”</i>	<i>Observed Probability of “No”</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.78	.22	.001
Any older siblings fail to graduate	.20	.80	.000
Fewer than 10 absences	.80	.20	.000
Male and female role model in home	.78	.22	.001
Faith based organization participation	.95	.05	.000
Parents attended some college	.73	.28	.007
Parents completed high school	.95	.05	.000
One parent in home employed	1.00	.00	.000
Both parents in home employed	.98	.03	.000
Vocational program participation	.73	.28	.007
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.63	.38	.155
Extracurricular activity participation	.80	.20	.000
High school sports participation	.70	.30	.018
Test Probability = .50	<i>p</i> < 0.05		

Results for Pearson Chi-square

To determine which combinations of variables may predispose male students from low socio-economic urban educational settings to complete high school, the ten characteristics of high school completers were analyzed using, chi square, a nonparametric test of statistical significance for bivariate tabular analysis. A significant

Pearson Chi-square analysis indicates that the reporting of the two independent variables is more frequent than would have happened by chance.

The analysis between preschool participation and any older sibling failing to graduate yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .256, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between preschool participation and sibling educational attainment. The analysis between preschool participation and fewer than ten absences yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .256, p < 0.05$. The result indicated there was no significant correlation between participating in preschool education and having fewer than ten absences. The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .982, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no significant correlation between preschool participation and having a male and female role model in the home. In the analysis between preschool participation and participation in a faith-based organization, there was no statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .339, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no significant correlation between preschool participation and participation in a faith-based organization. The analysis between preschool participation and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .769, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between preschool participation and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. The analysis between preschool participation and parents attended college yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .687, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between preschool participation and parents attended college. In the analysis between preschool participation and parents completed high school, there was no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .339, p < 0.05$. The results indicate

no correlation between preschool participation and parents completed high school. The analysis between preschool participation and both parents being employed yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .585, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between preschool participation and both parents being employed. In the analysis between preschool participation and vocational program participation, there was no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .687, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between preschool participation and vocational program participation. The analysis between preschool participation and extracurricular activity participation yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .256, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no relationship between preschool participation and extracurricular activity participation. The analysis between preschool participation and high school athletic participation yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .283, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between preschool participation and high school athletic participation. There was no significant correlation between the reporting of preschool participation and any of the other independent variables (Table 3).

Table 3

Chi-square Analyses between Preschool Participation
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Any older siblings fail to graduate	.256
Fewer than ten absences	.256
Male and female role model in home	.982
Faith based organization participation	.339
Parents attended some college	.687
Parents completed high school	.339
Both parents in home employed	.585
Vocational program participation	.687
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.769
Extracurricular activity participation	.256
High school sports participation	.283
<i>p</i> < 0.05	

The analysis between any older siblings failed to graduate and fewer than ten absences yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .114, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and fewer than ten absences. The analysis between any older siblings failed to graduate and male and female role model in the home yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .256, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and male and female role model in the home. In the analysis between failure of older sibling to graduate and participation

in a faith-based organization, there was statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .004, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and participation in a faith-based organization. In the analysis between failure of older siblings to graduate and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams, no significance was found, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .414, p < 0.05$. The results indicate no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. The analysis between failure of older siblings to graduate and parents attended college yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .859, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and parents attended college. The analysis between failure of older siblings to graduate and parents completed high school yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .227, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and parents completed high school. The analysis between failure of older siblings to graduate and both parents employed yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .613, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and both parents employed. The analysis between failure of older siblings to graduate and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .288, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and vocational participation. . In the analysis between failure of older sibling to graduate and participation in extracurricular activities, there was statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .000, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and participation in extracurricular activities. In the analysis between failure of older sibling

to graduate and participation in high school athletics, there was statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .002, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between failure of older siblings to graduate and participation in high school athletics. The analyses indicated correlations between failure of older siblings to complete high school and church attendance, participation in extracurricular activities, and participation in high school athletics (Table 4).

Table 4
Chi-square Analyses between Failure of Older Siblings to Graduate
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.256
Fewer than ten absences	.114
Male and female role model in home	.256
Faith based organization participation	.004
Parents attended some college	.859
Parents completed high school	.227
Both parents in home employed	.613
Vocational program participation	.288
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.414
Extracurricular activity participation	.000
High school sports participation	.002
<i>p < 0.05</i>	

The analysis between fewer than ten absences and male and female role model in the home yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .850, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and having both a male and female role model in the home during the high school years. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and participation in a faith-based organization yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .468, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and participation in a faith-based organization. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .414, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and parents attended college yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .859, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and parents attended some college. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and parents completed high school yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .277, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and parents completed high school. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and both parents employed yielded statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .043, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between fewer than ten absences and both parents being employed. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .288, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and participation in a vocational program. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and participation in extracurricular

activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .114, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and participation in extracurricular activities. The analysis between fewer than ten absences and participation in high school athletics yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .605, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between fewer than ten absences and participation in high school athletics. The only correlation was found between fewer than ten absences and both parents being employed during the high school years (Table 5).

Table 5

Chi-square Analyses between Fewer than Ten Absences
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.256
Any older siblings fail to graduate	.114
Male and female role model in home	.850
Faith based organization participation	.468
Parents attended some college	.859
Parents completed high school	.277
Both parents in home employed	.043
Vocational program participation	.288
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.414
Extracurricular activity participation	.114
High school sports participation	.605
<i>p < 0.05</i>	

The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in a faith-based organization yielded statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .007, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in a faith-based organization. The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .204, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home and parents attended college yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .687, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and parents attended college. The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home and parents graduated from high school yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .585, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and parents graduated from high school. The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in a vocational program yielded statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .036, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in a vocational program. The analysis between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in extracurricular activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .256, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in extracurricular activities. The analysis between having a male and

female role model in the home and participation in high school athletics yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .283, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between having a male and female role model in the home and participation in high school athletics. The analyses indicate correlations between having a male and female role model in the home during the high school years and participating in faith-based organizations and participation in vocational programs (Table 6).

Table 6
Chi-square Analyses between Having a Male and Female Role Model
in the Home and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool Participation	.982
Any older siblings fail to graduate	.256
Fewer than ten absences	.850
Faith based organization participation	.007
Parents attended some college	.687
Parents completed high school	.434
Both parents in home employed	.585
Vocational program participation	.036
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.204
Extracurricular activity participation	.256
High school sports participation	.283
<i>p < 0.05</i>	

The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .708, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams. The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and parents attended college yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .372, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and parents attending college. The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and parents completed high school yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .739, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and having parents who are high school graduates. The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and both parents employed yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .816, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and both parents being employed. The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .372, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in a vocational program. The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in extracurricular activities yielded statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .004, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in extracurricular activities. The analysis between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in high school athletics yielded statistical

significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .027, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in high school athletics. The analyses indicate that there are correlations between participation in church or some other faith-based organization and participation in extracurricular activities and high school athletics (Table 7).

Table 7

Chi-square Analyses between Participation in a Faith- Based Organization and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.339
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.004
Fewer than ten absences	.468
Male and female role model	.007
Parents attended some college	.372
Parents completed high school	.739
Both parents in home employed	.816
Vocational program participation	.372
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.708
Extracurricular activity participation	.004
High school sports participation	.027
<i>p < 0.05</i>	

The analysis between participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams and parents attended college yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .927, p < 0.05$. The

results indicated no correlation between tutoring for high stakes exit exams and parents attended college. The analysis between participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams and parents completed high school yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .261, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between tutoring for high stakes exit exams and parents completed high school. The analysis between participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams and both parents employed yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .433, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between tutoring for high stakes exit exams and both parents employed. The analysis between participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .522, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between tutoring for high stakes exit exams and participation in a vocational program. The analysis between participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams and participation in extracurricular activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = 1.00, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between tutoring for high stakes exit exams and participation in extracurricular activities. The analysis between participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams and participation in high school athletics yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .285, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between tutoring for high stakes exit exams and participation in high school athletics. The results for the analyses of participation in tutoring for high stakes testing can be found in Table 8.

Table 8

Chi-square Analyses between Participation in Tutoring for High
Stakes Exit Exams and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.769
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.414
Fewer than ten absences	.414
Male and female role model	.204
Faith-based organization participation	.708
Parents attended some college	.927
Parents completed high school	.261
Both parents in home employed	.433
Vocational program participation	.522
Extracurricular activity participation	1.00
High school sports participation	.285
<i>p</i> < 0.05	

The analysis between parents attended college and both parents employed yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .533, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of parents who attended college and children of two parents who were employed. The analysis between parents attended college and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .416, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of parents who attended college and students who participated in a vocational program. The analysis between parents attended college

and participation in extracurricular activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .111, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of parents who attended college and students who participated in extracurricular activities. The analysis between parents attended college and participation in high school athletics yielded statistical significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .037, p < 0.05$. The results indicated a correlation between children of parents who attended college and students who participated in high school athletics. The results of the analyses of students whose parents attended college and the other independent variables can be found in Table 9.

Table 9

Chi-square Analyses between Parents Attended College
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.687
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.859
Fewer than ten absences	.859
Male and female role model	.687
Faith-based organization participation	.732
Both parents in home employed	.533
Vocational program participation	.416
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.927
Extracurricular activity participation	.111
High school sports participation	.037
<i>p < 0.05</i>	

The analysis between both parents completed high school and both parents employed yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .816, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two parents graduated from high school and children of two parents who were both employed. The analysis between both parents completed high school and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .465, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two parents graduated from high school and students who participated in a vocational program. The analysis between both parents completed high school and participation in extracurricular activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .277, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two parents graduated from high school and students who participated in extracurricular activities. The analysis between both parents completed high school and participation in high school athletics yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .527, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two parents graduated from high school and students who participated in high school athletics. The results of the analyses of participants with two parents who completed high school and the other independent variables can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

Chi-square Analyses between Parents Completed High School
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.339
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.227
Fewer than ten absences	.277
Faith-based organization participation	.434
Male and female role model	.739
Both parents in home employed	.816
Vocational program participation	.465
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.261
Extracurricular activity participation	.277
High school sports participation	.527
<i>p</i> < 0.05	

The analysis between both parents employed and participation in a vocational program yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .533, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two employed parents and students who participated in a vocational program. The analysis between both parents employed and participation in extracurricular activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .613, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two employed parents and students who participated in extracurricular activities. The analysis between both parents employed and participation in high school athletics yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40)$

= .507, $p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between children of two employed parents and students who participated in high school athletics. The results of the analyses of participants with two parents who were employed and the other independent variables can be found in Table 11.

Table 11
Chi-square Analyses between Both Parents Employed
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.585
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.613
Fewer than ten absences	.043
Male and female role model	.585
Faith-based organization participation	.816
Parents attended some college	.533
Parents completed high school	.816
Vocational program participation	.533
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.433
Extracurricular activity participation	.613
High school sports participation	.507
$p < 0.05$	

The analysis between participation in a vocational program and participation in a extracurricular activities yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .288, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between students who participate in a vocational program

and students who participated in extracurricular activities. The analysis between participation in a vocational program and participation in high school athletics yielded no significance, $\chi^2(1, N = 40) = .315, p < 0.05$. The results indicated no correlation between students who participate in a vocational program and students who participated in high school athletics. The results of the analyses of students who participated in a vocational program and the other independent variables can be found in Table 12.

Table 12
Chi-square Analyses between Participated in a Vocational Program and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.687
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.288
Fewer than ten absences	.288
Male and female role model	.036
Faith-based organization participation	.372
Parents attended some college	.416
Parents completed high school	.465
Both parents in home employed	.533
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.522
Extracurricular activity participation	.288
High school sports participation	.315
<i>p < 0.05</i>	

Participation in extracurricular activities has been discussed in the analyses of the other independent variables. The results of the analyses of students who participated in extracurricular activities and the other independent variables can be found in Table 13.

Table 13

Chi-square Analyses between Participated in Extracurricular Activities and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.256
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.000
Fewer than ten absences	.114
Male and female role model	.256
Faith-based organization participation	.004
Parents attended some college	.111
Parents completed high school	.277
Both parents in home employed	.613
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.288
Vocational program participation	1.00
High school sports participation	.000
<i>p</i> < 0.05	

Participation in high school sports has been discussed in the analyses of the other independent variables. The results of the analyses of students who participated in high school athletics and the other independent variables can be found in Table 14.

Table 14

Chi-square Analyses between Participation in Extracurricular Activities
and Other Independent Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Significance Level</i>
Preschool participation	.283
Any older sibling fail to graduate	.002
Fewer than ten absences	.605
Male and female role model	.283
Faith-based organization participation	.027
Parents attended some college	.037
Parents completed high school	.527
Both parents in home employed	.507
Participation in tutoring for exit exam	.315
Vocational program participation	.285
<i>p</i> < 0.05	

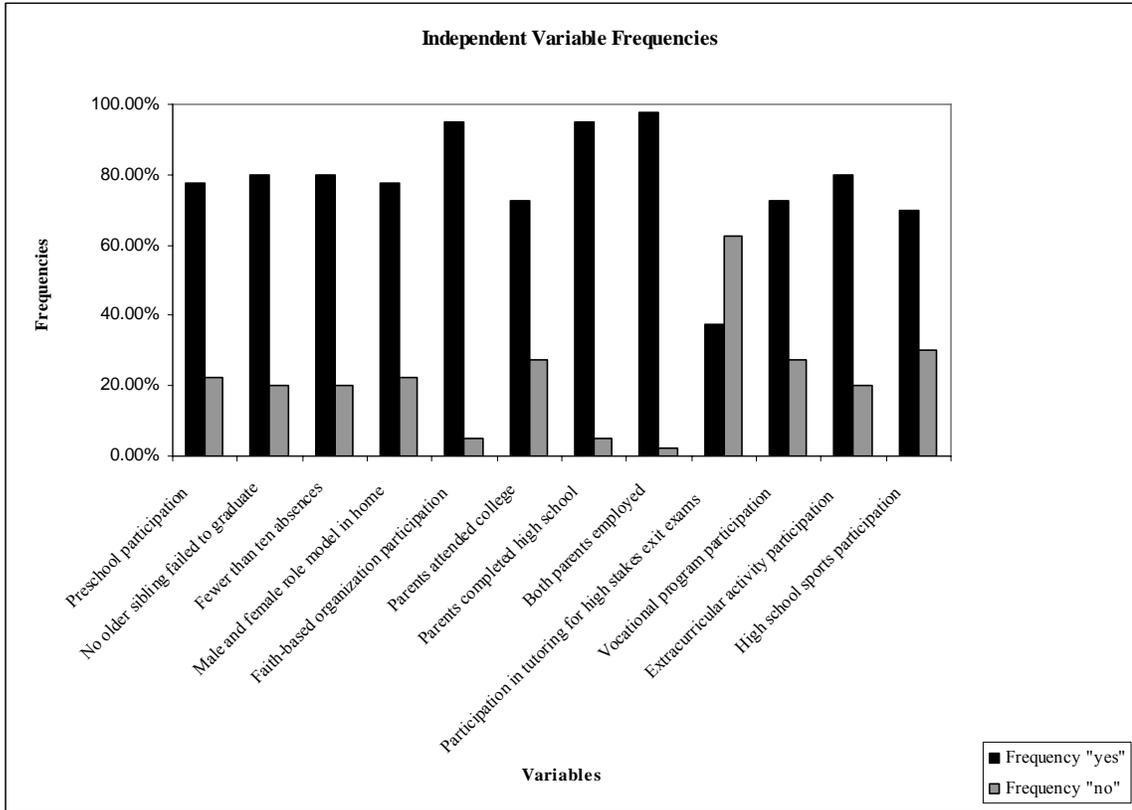
Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One

In order to answer research question one, descriptive statistics and binomial distributions were applied to the data obtained from the survey to determine observed frequencies of each independent variable. The observed frequencies were compared to the expected frequencies (0.50) for each independent variable. The observed frequencies were used to determine which of the independent variables were reported at high enough

frequencies to indicate that they had statistical significance apart from the other variables (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Frequencies for Independent Variables



The frequencies of all the independent variables were statistically significant except participation in a tutoring program for high stakes exit exams. Preschool participation, sibling educational attainment, attendance, family configuration, participation in a faith-based organization, parent educational attainment, parent employment, vocational program participation, and extracurricular activity/sport

participation were reported by participants at statistically significant frequencies. They were reported by a great enough proportion of survey participants that it could not be attributed to chance.

By determining which of the independent variables were independently significant, the researcher could better perform the statistical tests to determine pairs of independent variables which might occur together in greater than expected frequencies. The independent variables were paired with one another and Chi-square was run on each pair. Through the analysis of the Chi-square test, it was determined that there are pairs of independent variables which yield statistical significance. Therefore, Chi-square analysis indicated an affirmative answer to research question one.

Research Question Two

To answer research question two, the researcher had to determine whether there were relationships between the independent variables. The nonparametric test of statistical significance, chi-square, was employed to determine if relationships existed between the independent variables. Chi-square was employed to determine the strength of the relationships. Of the 54 possibly related pairs of variables, only nine statistically significant relationships existed. Those relationships and the chi-square value are demonstrated in Table 15 in descending order. In order for the relationship to be determined statistically significant, the chi-square value had to be .05 or lower indicating a 5% or lower chance that the correlation could have occurred by chance.

Table 15

Statistically Significant Independent Variable Pairs

Variable	Variable	Value
Any older sibling fail to graduate	Participation in extracurricular activities	.000
Any older sibling fail to graduate	Participation in high school sports	.002
Any sibling older fail to graduate	Participation in faith-based organization	.004
Participation in faith-based organization	Participation in extracurricular activities	.004
Male and female role model in home	Participation in faith-based organization	.007
Participation in faith-based organization	Participation in high school sports	.027
Male and female role model in home	Participation in vocational program	.036
Both parents attended college	Participation in high school sports	.037
Fewer than ten absences	Both parents in home employed	.043

p < 0.05

The chi-square values indicate variable pairs that have a statistically significant correlation. The chi-square analysis indicates that there is a relationship between the independent variables sibling educational attainment and extracurricular activity participation. There is a correlation between sibling educational attainment and participation in high school athletics. There is a correlation between sibling educational attainment and participation in a faith-based organization. Chi-square values indicate a relationship between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in extracurricular activities. A correlation between participation in a faith-based organization and participation in high school sports is indicated by the chi-square value.

Chi-square does not indicate that there is a relationship among sibling educational attainment, participation in extracurricular activities, participation in high school athletics, and participation in a faith-based organization although these independent variables appear several times in the chi-square analysis.

There is a relationship between the independent variables presence of a male and female role model in the home and participation in a faith based organization. A correlation is indicated between presence of a male and female role model in the home and participation in a vocational program. The chi-square statistic does not indicate a relationship among these three independent variables through.

Chi-square statistics indicate a statistically significant relationship between the independent variables having parents who attended college and participation in high school sports. A relationship is indicated between the independent variables fewer than ten absences and both parents employed during the high school years.

The analysis of chi-square indicated nine relationships between pairs of independent variables. These correlations indicate a positive response to research question two. There appears to be pairs of independent variables, or student characteristics, which are found in statistically significant frequencies in male students from a low socio-economic urban setting, which may predispose them to successful high school completion.

Summary of Results

The purpose of this study was to determine if there a pairs of characteristics found in statistically significant frequencies among male students from a low socio-economic

urban educational setting which predisposes them to successful high school completion. The data was gathered from an analysis of the responses to the “Successful High School Completion Survey” (Appendix C). Binomial distribution, response frequencies, and chi-square values were used to analyze the data. The data analysis indicated statistically significant relationships between nine of the 54 possible variable combinations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the study, discusses the findings of the study, draws conclusions about the findings of the study, and makes recommendations which serve as a basis for future research in the area of drop out prevention.

Summary

The graduation rate in Mississippi has become a topic of great interest to the Superintendent of Education of Mississippi (Coffey, 2006). The graduation rate for the 2005-2006 school year was 61.1% (Coffey). As a result, Dr. Bounds and the Mississippi Board of Education set a goal that the graduation rate will be 85% for the 2018-2019 school year. This goal is to be met through drop out prevention programs at the district and school levels.

Drop out prevention programs should target the main reasons students drop out of high school. Current research indicates that students' high school completion is related to a variety of characteristics including preschool participation, sports/extracurricular activity participation, family configuration, participation in a faith-based organization, parental educational attainment, sibling educational attainment, attendance, parental employment, participation in a vocational program, and participation in tutoring for high

stakes exit exams. The characteristics identified by current research were utilized as the variables for this research study.

The purpose of this research study was to determine if there are specific factors or pairs of factors which predispose male students from a low socio-economic urban setting to successful high school completion. The second purpose of this study was to determine if there are pairs of factors that are correlated with one another in the data provided for this research.

Data were gathered from 40 participants who graduated from Meridian Public Schools during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. Participants completed the “Successful High School Completion Survey” during the spring of 2008 (Appendix C). The data from the surveys was analyzed using SPSS version 11.0. Frequencies, binomial distributions, and chi-square values were computed for each of the independent variables and all possible pairs of independent variables.

The frequencies and binomial distributions indicated that of the ten characteristics, which served as the independent variables in this study, nine of them occurred in greater frequencies than would be expected by chance. Participation in tutoring for high stakes exit exams was the only independent variable which was not reported by enough participants to be determined statistically significant.

The chi-square values of all the possible pairs of independent variables indicated statistically significant correlations between nine of the possible 54 pairs of independent variables. The independent variables participation in extracurricular activities and

participation in high school athletics occurred in more of the correlated pairs than any of the other independent variables.

Conclusions

Drop out prevention has become an integral part of public education in Mississippi with the creation of the Office of Dropout Prevention by the state legislature. With the emphasis placed on increasing the graduation rate, this research focused on the characteristics, which make a student at high risk for high school drop out, more likely to complete high school.

Data were gathered on ten variables linked to high school drop out by current research. That data indicated that the frequencies at which nine of the ten variables were reported through the survey indicate that those nine variables are statistically significant. Preschool participation was reported by 77.5% of the survey participants. This indicates that participation in preschool education may make students more likely to graduate from high school. The presence of no older siblings who failed to graduate was indicated by 80% of the study participants. This may indicate that having older siblings who graduated from high school makes students more likely to graduate from high school. Eighty percent of study participants indicated fewer than 10 absences per school year. This may indicate that high rates of school attendance positively contribute to high school graduation. The presence of a nuclear family was reported by 77.5% of study participants which may indicate that students who live with both a male and female role model are more likely to complete high school. Participation in a faith-based organization was reported by 95% of the study participants which may indicate that participation in church

or church activities makes students more likely to graduate from high school. Ninety-five percent of study participants reported that both parents completed high school. This may indicate that children of parents who graduated from high school are more likely to be high school graduates. All of the study participants reported having one parent who was employed and 97.5% reported having both parents employed during high school. This may indicate that students of employed parents are more likely to graduate from high school. Vocational education was reported by 72.5% of the study participants possibly indicating that students who participate in vocational education are more likely graduate from high school. Participation in extracurricular activities was reported by 80% of study participants, and participation in high school athletics was reported by 70% of study participants. This may indicate that participation in sports or extracurricular activities helps to increase a student's likelihood of graduating from high school. Only 37.5% of the study participants indicated participation in a tutoring program for high stakes exit exams. This may indicate that tutoring programs may not make those students more likely to graduate from high school.

In chi-square analyses, nine of the 54 pairs of independent variables yielded statistically significant values indicating some relationship between the pairs of variables. Students with no older siblings who failed to graduate are correlated with students who participated in extracurricular activities and high school athletics. This may indicate students whose siblings all graduated from high school and participated in sports or extracurricular activities during high school are more likely to complete high school. Students who had no older siblings fail to graduate from high school were correlated with

students who participated in faith-based organizations. This indicates that students whose older siblings all graduated from high school and participated in church or church activities are more likely to graduate from high school. Students who participated in faith-based organizations were correlated with students who participated in high school athletics and extracurricular activities. This indicates that students who attend church or participate in church activities and high school athletics or other extracurricular activities may be more likely to complete high school. Students who lived in a home with a nuclear family were correlated with students who participated in faith-based organizations and students who participated in vocational education. This indicates that students who live with both a male and female role model and participate in church or vocational education may be more likely to graduate from high school. Participants who reported that both parents attended college were correlated with students who participated in high school sports. This may indicate that participation in high school athletics and parental employment may have a positive impact on high school graduation of students in a high risk category for high school drop out. Students with fewer than 10 absences were correlated with students with both parents employed. This indicates that students of employed parents who have a high rate of high school attendance may be more likely to complete high school.

The analyses of the data gathered through the survey indicate a positive response to both research questions. There do appear to be common factors among students who graduated from Meridian High School during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 school years. Not only do nine of the ten variables occur in statistically significant frequencies, there

are nine pairs of independent variables that are correlated according to statistically significant chi-square values.

Recommendations

Based on the results from this study, several areas are suggested for future research. These recommendations are listed below:

1. The results of this study revealed that certain characteristics of male students from a low socio-economic educational setting do seem to predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated with students from a high socio-economic educational setting.
2. The results of this study revealed that certain characteristics of male students from an urban educational setting do seem to predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated with students from a rural educational setting.
3. The results of this study revealed that certain characteristics of male students seem to predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated with female students.
4. The results of this study revealed that certain characteristics of male students who successfully completed high school do seem to predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated with a sample of students containing both graduates and high school dropouts.
5. The results of this study revealed that certain pairs of characteristics of male graduates from a low socio-economic urban educational setting do seem to

predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be extended to statistically test for groups of three or more variables which may be predispose students to successful high school completion.

6. The results of this study revealed that certain characteristics of male graduates from a low socio-economic urban educational setting do seem to predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated in other states in the United States.
7. The results of this study revealed that certain characteristics of male graduates from a low socio-economic urban educational setting do seem to predispose them to successful high school graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that this study be replicated nearer to the 2018-2019 goal for a 85% graduation rate in Mississippi.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL



January 24, 2008

Terry Larabee
107 Meagan St
Philadelphia, MS 39350

RE: IRB Study #08-018: Common Factors Linking Male High Completers from a Low Socio-Economic Urban Setting

Dear Mr. Larabee:

The above referenced project was reviewed and approved via administrative review on 1/24/2008 in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2). Continuing review is not necessary for this project. However, any modification to the project must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Any failure to adhere to the approved protocol could result in suspension or termination of your project. The IRB reserves the right, at anytime during the project period, to observe you and the additional researchers on this project.

Please refer to your IRB number (#08-018) when contacting our office regarding this application.

Thank you for your cooperation and good luck to you in conducting this research project. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me at kcrowley@research.msstate.edu or 325-8543.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katherine Crowley".

Katherine Crowley
Assistant IRB Compliance Administrator

cc: Dr. Ed Davis

Office for Regulatory Compliance

P.O. Box 6223 • 8A Morgan Street • Mailstop 9563 • Mississippi State, MS 39762 • (662) 325-3294 • FAX (662) 325-8776

APPENDIX B

MERIDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS PERMISSION LETTER



Meridian Public School District

Office of the Superintendent

1019 25th Avenue
Meridian, MS 39301
601-483-6271
FAX: 601-485-4818

Sylvia Autry
Superintendent of Education

January 5, 2008

IRB Committee
Mississippi State University

To Whom It May Concern:

Terry Larabee has my permission to conduct a research project, entitled "Common Factors Linking Male High School Completers from a Low Socioeconomic Urban Setting". The purpose of the study is to examine common characteristics among urban high school completers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. I understand that Meridian Public School District will be releasing student information to Mr. Larabee from which he will select of random sample of participants for his study.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Autry
Superintendent
Meridian Public Schools

MERIDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT • P.O. BOX 31 • MERIDIAN, MS 39302 • (601) 483-6271

Charting the course for student success!

APPENDIX C
SURVEY SAMPLE

A Statement for Participants

Dear Participant,

Drop-out prevention is a major issue in education at this time. I am conducting a research project on the subject. However, I will be looking for common factors that help students to complete high school. I believe that it is more important to know what makes students complete high school successfully than what makes them leave. In this survey, I am trying to learn what factors contributed to your personal success in high school. The information you give will be used to help create programs which will benefit other students like yourself.

If you participate in this survey, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey will take about 30 minutes of your time.

Do not write your name on this survey. The answers you give will be kept in private. No one will know what you write. Answer the questions based on your life and successful completion of high school. Completing the survey is voluntary. Whether or not you answer the questions will have no positive or negative impact on you. If you are not comfortable answering a question, just leave it blank. The questions that ask about your background will be used to describe the participants in the survey and to identify common factors. The information will not be used to learn your name. No names will ever be reported.

Thank you so much for your help.

Successful High School Completion Survey

	Yes	No
1 Did you participate in a private preschool program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Did you participate in a public preschool program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Did you attend a preschool program prior to kindergarten?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Did you participate in high school sports?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Did you participate in extracurricular activities in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Were you a member of any clubs or organized groups in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Did you live in a home with two parents during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Did you live in a home with both a male and female role model during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Did both your mother and your father live in the same home with you during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Did you attend church regularly during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Were you a member of a church during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Did you participate in church activities such as Sunday school, summer camps, and youth programs during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Did one or more of your parents complete high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 Did one or more of your parents attend some college?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Did one or more of your parents earn some type of certification in order to pursue a career?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 Did you have older sibling who graduated from high school before you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 Did any of your older siblings fail to complete high school before you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 Did all of your older siblings complete high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 Did you attend school regularly in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20	Did you have excessive absences in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Did you have any health issues that made regular high school attendance difficult?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	Were both your parents employed regularly in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Was one or more of your parents pursuing a career while you were in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Did one or more of your parents have a steady job in high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Did you take vocational classes during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Did you attend classes at Ross Collins Career and Vocational Center during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Were you a two-year completer in a vocational program during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28	Did you participate in school related tutoring for subject area tests during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	Did your parents employ a tutor to help you prepare for subject area tests during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	Did you work with a tutor to prepare for subject area tests during high school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>