A NARRATIVE STUDY OF FOSTER YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING
CLIMATE THROUGH A SELF DETERMINATION LENS

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my precious children and grandchildren.

They will always be my most treasured legacy.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER**

1. INTRODUCTION TO STUDY ................................................................. 1
   Problem Statement ........................................................................... 4
   Purpose of Study .............................................................................. 6
   Theoretical Framework .................................................................... 6
   Research Questions .......................................................................... 9
   Procedure .......................................................................................... 9
   Limitations ....................................................................................... 11
   Delimitations .................................................................................. 11
   Significance ..................................................................................... 12
   Definition of Terms .......................................................................... 12
   Summary .......................................................................................... 13

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ............................................. 15
   Theoretical Framework .................................................................... 16
   Self-Determination Theory Synopsis ........................................... 17
   A Scientific and Experimental Method ......................................... 19
   A Psychological Theory .................................................................. 20
   Human Needs .................................................................................. 25
   Autonomy ....................................................................................... 26
   Competence .................................................................................... 26
   Relatedness ..................................................................................... 27
   Areas of Psychological Interest and the Theories within SDT ............ 27
      Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) ............................................. 28
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organismic Integration Theory</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causality Orientations Theory (COT)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Contents Theory (GCT)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools as Settings for Education and Social Growth</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Foster Youth</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Youth and Education – Barriers/Needs</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Support</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability of SDT in the Classroom</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How My Study Will Add to the Literature</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. METHODOLOGY .............................................................. 56

| Research Questions | 56 |
| Sample Description | 57 |
| Protection of Students | 57 |
| Research Design | 58 |
| Data Collection | 59 |
| Data Analysis | 66 |
| Subjectivity Statement | 66 |
| Validity | 67 |
| Reporting Results | 67 |
| Summary | 68 |

4. RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS ........................................ 69

| Constant-Comparative Method | 69 |
| Snowball Sampling Method | 74 |
| Description of Sample | 76 |
| Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) | 77 |
| Themes and Sub-themes | 80 |
| Faith’s Life Story | 96 |
| Introduction | 96 |
| Runaway | 97 |
| Death of Father | 97 |
| Growing Up | 98 |
| Eighteen Years of Age | 104 |
# TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Happens Next?</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazel’s Life Story</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving from Place to Place</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School and High School</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Happens Next?</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asher’s Life Story</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Passes Away (Sixth-Grade)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister’s Sexual Abuse Uncovered/Changed Schools (Seventh Grade Year)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Homes</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Interviews</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava’s Life Story</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going into Foster Care</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going Home</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Happens Next?</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Themes</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1 Summary</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2 Summary</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3 Summary</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4 Summary</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: A Choices and Options in the Classroom</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5 Summary</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One Summary</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Confidence</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1 Summary</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Motivation</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2 Summary</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Inspiration</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3 Summary</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Emotional State</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4 Summary</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS ..........159

Findings and Interpretations ................................................................. 161
Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like ..........161
Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement ...............163
Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class ....................................165
Theme 4: A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening | 166
Theme 5: Choices and Options in the Classroom ..................................167
Research Question Two ........................................................................ 168
  Theme 1: Confidence ...................................................................... 168
  Theme 2: Motivation ....................................................................... 169
  Theme 3: Inspiration ..................................................................... 170
  Theme 4: Emotional State ............................................................... 170
Introduction ........................................................................................ 171
Implications for Further Research ......................................................172
Recommendations for Further Research .............................................176
Conclusion ..........................................................................................177

REFERENCES ..........................................................................................178

APPENDICES ..........................................................................................184

  A: Mercer Institutional Review Board Approval ..................................185
  B. Informed Consent Letter ................................................................ 187
  C. Copyright Permission ....................................................................192
  D. Learning Climate Questionnaire ....................................................194
  E. Codes .............................................................................................198
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participants Demographic Data .................................................................76
Table 2. Learning Climate Questionnaire .................................................................77
Table 3. Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, Family-Like Connection ..............................................................................................................134
Table 4. Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement ...............137
Table 5. Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class .......................................140
Table 6. Theme 4: Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening ....142
Table 7. Theme 5: Choices and Options in the Classroom .....................................146
Table 8. Theme 1: Confidence .............................................................................150
Table 9. Theme 2: Motivation .............................................................................154
Table 10. Theme 3: Inspiration ..........................................................................156
Table 11. Theme 4: Emotional State .....................................................................158
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Research Question One Themes</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Research Question Two Themes</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>How Teacher Autonomy Support and SDT Affect Foster Youth</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

A NARRATIVE STUDY OF FOSTER YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING CLIMATE THROUGH A SELF DETERMINATION LENS
Under the direction of KAREN WELLER SWANSON, Ed. D.

Foster youth or former foster youth face many educational, social, and emotional struggles in the classroom. Through a lens of self-determination, this study investigates the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom, as well as how they perceive that teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement. The five themes that arose from research question one in this study are: Theme 1 – Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, Family-Like Atmosphere; Theme 2 – Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement; Theme 3 – Understanding the Goal of the Class; Theme 4 – Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening; and Theme 5 – Choices and Options in the Classroom. These themes suggest ways that teachers can provide for the needs of foster youth while also improving their motivation and academic performance. The four themes which emerged from research question two are: Theme 1 - Confidence, Theme 2 - Motivation; Theme 3 – Inspiration; and Theme 4 – Emotional State. These themes concern the effect on the foster child of having autonomy supportive requirements met.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (2015) data report for the 2015 fiscal year showed that 427,910 children in the United States are in foster care. Despite the efforts of teachers, foster parents, and agencies involved with foster children, a significant number of foster children show signs of behavior problems (Zetlin et al., 2006), delays in educational skills, and lack of success in school (Belin et. al., 2000). Moreover, foster youth are excessively represented in special education classes (Zetlin et al., 2006); nearly half of foster youth (45%) in grades six and eight attend special education classes, in contrast to 16% of non-foster youth (Kirk & Day, 2011).

Statistics disclosed the adverse impacts on the lives of foster children in that only half of all foster youth become high school graduates, less than 3% attain a bachelor’s degree, and greater than half of all foster children wind up on government assistance, become incarcerated or homeless (Davis, 2016). Possible causes for the tribulations of foster children are school and family mobility (Kirk & Day, 2011; Evans et al., 2017; Zetlin et al., 2006; Pecora, 2012). Other issues influencing the lower academic accomplishments of foster youth involve lack of education and resources of foster parents (Evans et al., 2017). Some investigations reported the child's restricted and inconsistent accessibility to educational organizations (Zetlin et al., 2006). While other research revealed the possibilities of exposure to drugs before birth, inadequate responsibility or supervision of educational results by the child welfare system (Evans et al., 2017; Zetlin, 2006), and
teacher outlooks (Emerson & Lovitt, 2008). While there are a few justifications in explaining why foster youth obtain lower educational attainment than non-foster youth, there remains inadequate theoretic and practical examination of the explanations (Evans et al., 2017). As foster children age out of foster care, the two elements that cripple their successful passage into adulthood the most are poor academic success and high circumstances of poverty (Jones, 2012).

A combination of factors such as impoverishment, low parental education, lack of social connections, a larger family unit, housing mobility, experiencing severe or unpredictable childrearing habits, and the extent of community impoverishment puts youth at a heightened likelihood of mistreatment and abuse which decreases their possibility of academic accomplishment (Stone, 2007). There is an array of reasons, which are not random, that foretell entrance into foster care (Stone, 2007). These reasons could justify academic detriment alone; they include abuse, mistreatment, social and economic deficiencies, as well as a racial and ethnic category (Stone, 2007). Poverty is one of the strongest forecasters for child mistreatment and foster care placement; one might argue that placement with a foster family is a societal dilemma and that the advantages are against the economically disadvantaged (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2014).

Furthermore, the rank of being a child significantly restricts one’s options, as well as changes the essential meaning of fundamental human rights. This, in addition to family involvement with the child welfare agency, is a predisposition for severe deprivation and cultural prejudice (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2014). It is especially vital, although risky, to attain fairness for the kids situated in child welfare (Whitt-
Children in the system have virtually no vote, no voice and no power (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2014). Moreover, the mothers and fathers of youth in foster care are frequently just as helpless because of great indigence and lower social and economic positioning, which limits and severely restricts human potential in numerous areas of activity, even so far as decreasing life expectancy (Whitt-Woosley & Sprang, 2014).

The duties of the U.S. foster care and welfare system are significant (Bruce, J., Dozier, M., Fisher, P. A., Gunnar, M. R., & Pears, K. C. (2006). In a world where about 900,000 children receive mistreatment, foster care is a vital organization (Bruce, et. al., 2006). While numerous foster children cope poorly, some foster children grow up seemingly unharmed by their adverse circumstances (Bruce, et. al., 2006). Limited scientific information exists that defines the factors responsible for thriving adaptations versus poor adjustments in life outcomes of foster children (Bruce, et. al., 2006). Studies show that interventions that involve caregiving may improve behaviors in foster children as well as protect them from the effects of external stress, and encourage resiliency in these youth (Bruce, et. al., 2006). Research confirms that some of these initial troubling effects in foster children could be reversible by supporting more sensitive, responsive caregiving in the circumstances of foster care (Bruce, et. al., 2006). Even though behavioral issues of foster youth are at the forefront of many discussions, there does not appear to be any research regarding collaborative attempts to support children in foster care with challenging behaviors (McLean, 2012). The findings in a study of foster youth declare the importance of analyzing relationships between those closely linked to the everyday experiences of children in foster care (McLean, 2012).
It is well-recognized that foster children achieve lower academically than their peers who are not or have never been in out of home care (Sugden, 2013). As mentioned earlier, only around 50% of foster children graduate from high school, but also, they have a greater chance of omission from academic situations and receipt of less parental attention concerning their education than non-foster classmates (Sugden, 2013). Historically, there is an absence of gratitude involving the educational attainment of foster youth (Sugden, 2013).

Youth in foster care are particularly susceptible to lower academic achievement. There are over half-million children in foster care with almost three-fourths of them being of school age; improvement in the educational outcomes of foster youth is vital (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2012). There are numerous studies involving foster children from a social work perspective but relatively few about curriculum and instruction relating to a classroom setting from the viewpoint of the foster child as a student.

Problem Statement

There is a need for teachers to work to understand the point of view of foster students and the unique behavioral and instructional requirements related to the particular circumstances in which they live (Steine-Steele, 2015). Most children in foster care have emotional scars due to abandonment, abuse, neglect, violence, and separation from their families (Emerson & Lovitt, 2008). These experiences can cause emotional, physical, and behavioral problems which impede learning (Emerson & Lovitt, 2008). A current investigation involving national characteristic data on kids across the U.S. revealed that youngsters assigned to foster care acquire an assortment of features of that population.
Social and economic factors influence their individualities which make them up to five times more inclined than other children to have psychological illnesses such as “depression, anxiety, behavioral, or conduct problems, and Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder” (Turney & Wildeman, 2017, p. 118). Such situations place foster children at an educational disadvantage. Many foster children initially go into foster care having mental insufficiencies due to mistreatment (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2012). Foster youth commonly score much lower in reading and math on statewide exams in addition to generally performing below peers in the same grade (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2012).

According to Ryan & Deci (2017), learning early in life is inherently driven and caring environments powerfully impact a person’s natural tendencies to gain knowledge. Teachers who lack faith in the naturally occurring growth of children and tend to control rather than support students may weaken the intrinsic motivation which involves learning, mastering, or exploring. Also, if mothers or fathers are not psychologically supportive of the needs of their children, their children will be less intrinsically motivated as they grow older than if they had received psychological needs support as a child. The absence of psychological need support affects autonomy in internalizing the principles of parents, increasing parent and child disconnection, and promoting more unsociable perspectives and actions in addition to other undesirable results.

It is vital that the school provide children with opportunities to establish positive relationships in case these fundamental human needs are not otherwise accessible (Benard, 1993). For children facing hardship, the school must be an actual, vital, defensive, and caring source; the happy and positive influences of education are indeed
distinct and compelling for those students who are weakest and who possess a limited support system (Rutter, 1991). Involvements at school hold the potential for encouraging and enduring effects on a student’s societal and academic growth (Rutter, 1991, Sylva, 1994). This research study investigates the perceptions of foster children about their education and the implementation of strategies by teachers to promote self-determination.

Purpose of Study

The goal of this study is to investigate the perceptions of foster children about their self-determination and success in school. This study seeks to determine the effect of Self-determination theory (SDT) on foster children and how they perceive SDT in affecting their motivation and achievement.

A focus of this study is to investigate accounts of teacher effectiveness in autonomy support in influencing motivation of foster children. Educating the foster child has many challenges, but the power of teachers to undeniably impact the lives of foster children gets limited recognition. The central focus of this study is foster youth who are presently in foster care or who have previously spent time in foster care.

This study portrays an attempt to support the efforts of foster children in school. This research proposes to influence the educational attainment of foster children. A change needs to result to make a positive difference in the educational, economic, and emotional outcome of their lives.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework for this research study is one of constructivism or social constructivism and is united with interpretivism, which is a standard method in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014).
Self-determination theory (SDT), according to Ryan & Deci (2017), is a biologic approach which is grounded on empirical evidence and involves the evolution of a person's personality and behavior. While SDT’s examination is psychological, it simultaneously distinguishes the kinds of motivation on a spectrum from control to autonomy. Even though SDT involves psychology, the analysis considers the biologic basis of these mental and emotional habits and arranges them in a viewpoint of gradual development.

Ryan and Deci (2017), explained the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as specifically including the way in which circumstances in the social environment assist or impede a person's flourishing. In distinct or general fields or efforts, SDT objectively analyzes how culture, biology, and environmental circumstances positively or negatively influence an individual's existing capabilities for intellectual development, commitment, and well-being. SDT's research carefully investigates constituents, within societal situations and inherent to personal growth, “that facilitate vitality, motivation, social integration and well-being, and, alternatively, those that contribute to depletion, fragmentation, and antisocial behaviors, and unhappiness” (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Ryan and Deci (2017) recounted the pressure that teachers encounter to increase student achievement, as well as the fact that schools are not small factories for knowledge but moreover significant environments for developing adolescents and children. Not only do students learn skills in basic subjects; schools are also places for learning about “authority, industry, social relationships, and how they are perceived and valued by others outside the home” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p 353). Schools mold the progress of the whole child, while simultaneously affecting academic results in addition to motivations,
beliefs about oneself, and the strengths and honor in developing oneself (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Bandura, 1977).

Ryan and Deci (2017) highlighted that the potential and anticipation of educational facilities is to enable the promotion of great inspiration, commitment, involvement, social responsibility, and psychological wellness. Schools are meant to empower and enhance cognition, in addition to improving knowledge in subjects including “science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)” (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 353). Autonomy supportive teaching involves learning environments which emphasize social relatedness and autonomy support which encompasses the whole child.

Ryan and Deci (2000) stated that actions which are intrinsically motivated result from interests and satisfactions from basic psychological requirements for competence and autonomy and are examples of self-determined behavior. On the other hand, actions which are extrinsically motivated result because they are contributory to a separate concern and can fluctuate in self-determination; however, extrinsic motivations become self-determined during integration or internalization. When schools enable self-determined learning, it necessitates classroom situations which promote the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness; these three basic needs sustain essential requirements for feelings of connectedness, effectiveness, and self-direction during exposure to unfamiliar material and while practicing newly attained skills. For this study, the self-determination theory, which involves the three basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, will assist participants in exploring the experiences of foster children or former foster children relating to school.
Research Questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement?

Procedure

The proposed research design is a qualitative study on the perceptions of foster children and teachers regarding the implementation of strategies by teachers which support self-determination. Using narrative analysis, the researcher will administer the learning climate self-determination questionnaire to foster youth, follow-up by interviewing the foster child, then interpret the meaning of their perceptions.

Quantitative research emphasizes numbers and measurements as most important in data collection, while the priority in qualitative research is the depth and value of the data. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research goes over and above numerical expressions, quantification, totals, etc. to better understand the happening (Anyan, 2013).

A purposeful sampling technique involving Facebook will be used to locate foster children or former foster children. Finding participants also necessitate a snowball sampling technique which is non-probability sampling technique. Due to the relatively small population of foster children within communities, and in addition to placing a voluntary questionnaire on the websites of schools within Laurens County, the researcher will pose a question while partaking in casual conversations with people at research locations to obtain participants (Creswell, 2015).
In qualitative research, the methodology guides the process as the researcher gathers and analyzes the data collected regarding the research question (Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2015). By using a narrative analysis approach as its methodology, this research will seek to understand perceptions of foster children regarding the implementation of strategies by teachers to support self-determination in their educational endeavor.

Qualitative research methods of data collection such as a self-determination questionnaire and individual face-to-face interviews propose to guide the data collection process. Qualitative research interviews provide useful information which cannot be observed directly through observation, and genuine personal information presents itself through the interview (Creswell, 2015). The interviewer is in better control of specific questions to obtain useful kinds of information gathered (Creswell, 2015).

Tape recording and transcribing are vital components in narrative analysis regarding interviews (Riessman, 1993). Interview transcription follows the interview process. The first transcription sets the words into fixed form, whether on paper or digitally, as well as other noticeable aspects of the discussion such as pauses, giggling, and sobbing (Riessman, 1993). The next step is to return to the transcription to select parts of the transcription for a more thorough examination (Riessman, 1993). Scrutinization of transcripts will take place to examine elements of the conversation for interpretation (Riessman, 1993). Considerable time will be spent studying the transcriptions of multiple interviews before moving on to the next step. Analysis of the text will take place next.
The researcher will identify and apply verification methods by Glesne (1999) such as triangulation, clarification of researcher bias, member checking, rich, thick description, etc.

Limitations

There will be an examination of two limitations in the investigation. First, during interviews, there may be a social desirability conflict which may affect the answers of participants in that they may think it to be more socially acceptable to give a response which is incorrect. Participants will be encouraged to give honest answers and speak genuinely about their experiences when telling their story to alleviate a social desirability limitation. Second, the researcher will reassure the participants of confidentiality by explaining the use of pseudonyms when coding participants' identifying data and telling the participants of the absolute anonymity of this procedure.

Delimitations

Delimitations are features which control the extent and outline the limits in an investigation (Simon, 2011). A delimitation in this research are the participants chosen for conducting this inquiry. The participants in this study will be foster youth. The rationale for this location is the multiple foster families residing in this county. As the researcher collects the names of potential participants through snowball sampling, the researcher will contact those people to obtain participants for the study. Included in the projected link is a self-determination questionnaire for foster children, in addition to a link for parents to complete an electronic consent.
Significance

As the focus of research for foster children shifts from a negative educational perspective to a positive educational perspective, foster children will gain a more prominent voice in their quest for social justice. This study will give voice to foster children regarding educational attainment. This study will explore the perspectives and experiences of foster children regarding self-determination and education. The significance of this research investigation is to increase knowledge of teachers and school leaders by identifying factors which promote self-determination and educational attainment in foster youth. This research study will focus on strategies for teachers and school leaders to improve the academic support of foster children in their educational endeavor.

Definition of Terms:

*Autonomy* – The necessity to self-regulate one’s involvements and actions; voluntariness and not the same as being independent; self-endorsed and corresponding with one’s true fascinations and standards; engaging passionately (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

*Competence* – One’s basic need to feel productive and mastery; essential component in inspired activities; easily frustrated and diminishes if trials are too harsh, adverse feedback is prevalent, or efficiency weakens; is destabilized by disapproval and social comparison (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

*Education* - School, and learning.

*Educational Attainment* - Highest level of schooling a person has accomplished (Schwandt, 2013).
Foster Child - An adult or child that is presently in foster care or previously in foster care.

Homeless – A person who does not have a fixed home because they do not have enough money or cannot sustain safe or satisfactory sheltering (Schwandt, 2013).

Incarcerated – Someone imprisoned or detained in jail (Schwandt, 2013).

Relatedness – The sensation of being socially linked, cared for, belonging, and significance among others; equally vital is contributing to the group or displaying kindness (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Unemployed – Someone presently without work, but able and eager to work, (Schwandt, 2013).

Summary

Children assigned to foster care have remarkably lower outcomes in educational attainment than non-foster youth (Weinburg, Oshiro, & Shea, 2014). Research shows that children in foster care usually have low grades in school, below average scores on standardized exams, increased incidences of conduct issues and suspensions in school, as well as receiving special education assistance in greater proportions than corresponding children (Weinburg, Oshiro, & Shea, 2014).

Teachers make significant impacts on the educational, emotional, social, and behavioral aspects of a child's life during the early grades of school (Lucas-Molina, Williamson, Pulido, & Pérez-Albéniz, 2015). Warm, caring relationships with adults can help a child to defeat behavioral problems and lessen their feelings of alienation from school (Lucas-Molina et. al., 2015). Teacher–student relationships which are positive are
particularly critical for the empowerment of youth who come from negligent families (Lucas-Molina et. al., 2015).

According to Ryan and Deci (2017), social contexts, such as classrooms and schools, validate “feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness” and are the foundations for sustaining motivations which are intrinsic, as well as providing opportunities for extrinsic motivation to become increasingly self-determined (p. 65). While amotivation encompasses someone feeling no incentive or stimulation to do something, motivation entails an enthusiastic person initiated to finish an endeavor. Some theorists considered motivation as only motivated or unmotivated; however, SDT organizes motivation according to various “degrees of autonomy or self-determination” (p. 61). Ryan and Deci (2000) wrote that SDT distinguishes amongst different types of motivation depending on the purpose or reason that initiates the behavior. Numerous assignments that teachers require of their pupils are not innately fascinating or pleasurable, however understanding just how to encourage dynamic and willful (as opposed to inactive and governing) approaches to extrinsically motivating students is a vital method of practical instruction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The underachievement of foster children, as well as the negative impact it has on their life, may be better understood and improved by considering the foster child's perspective on how teachers can influence their self-determination.
While research shows that a child’s academic achievements predict their success in the future, it is even more critical for foster children (Burley & Halpern, 2001). The following paragraph is a quote by Gabriela Mistral (1945), a Nobel Prize winning poet of Chile:

We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life. Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made, and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer ‘Tomorrow,’ his name is today. (Jose-Rodrigo, 2015, para 4)

The purpose of the study is to determine foster children’s perceptions of teacher autonomy support and how they believe it affects their motivation and achievement. The theoretical framework used for this research investigation is based on Ryan and Deci’s work on SDT involving autonomy, competence and relatedness and how it applies to foster children in the classroom. This literature review focuses on the following questions:

1. What is the self-determination theory (SDT) and the six mini-theories embedded in SDT?

2. What are the characteristics of children in foster care?
3. What does research say about the educational attainment and outcomes of foster youth?

4. What are the barriers/needs concerning school attainment of foster youth?

5. How can teachers implement SDT to motivate students in the classroom?

Answering the questions above will address the importance of incorporating these theoretical frameworks and instructional practices into the classroom especially when teaching foster children and children living in poverty, due to the educational disadvantages they face in comparison to their more advantaged peers.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework used for this literature review is the self-determination theory (SDT). Ryan and Deci (2017) described SDT as enhancing the circumstances for nurturing complete growth in schools, then so are knowledge and academic results. The supreme excellence of education and success occurs by maintaining the pupils’ curiosity and action in knowledge, instead of when teachers depending on external motivations and powers to coerce students in the direction of confined, established and predetermined endings. Ryan and Deci (2017) wrote that schools are frameworks that can boost, or thwart the success of pupils. To flourish requires becoming interested, energetic, inventive, and completely operative grownups. Thriving people sense empowerment and confidence in their education and ability to solve problems. Flourishing individuals experience feelings of belongingness to their school, in addition to the greater community in which they live.

Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that, despite the significance of intrinsic motivation, developing a personalized worth for school assignments is also
necessary for long standing achievement. By way of internalizing and integrating, students can develop autonomous motivation for understanding information in which they may not think of as innately stimulating and may not be naturally driven to study but find worthy of knowing.

Self-Determination Theory Synopsis

Self-determination theory (SDT), according to Ryan & Deci (2017), is a biologic approach which is grounded on empirical evidence and involves the evolution of a person's personality and behavior. While SDT’s examination is psychological, it simultaneously distinguishes the kinds of motivation on a spectrum of control to autonomy. Even though SDT involves psychology, the analysis considers the biologic basis of these mental and emotional habits and arranges them in a viewpoint of gradual development.

Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that SDT expressly includes the way in which circumstances in the social environment assist or impede a person's flourishing. In distinct or general fields or efforts, SDT objectively analyzes how culture, biology, and environmental circumstances positively or negatively influence an individual's existing capabilities for intellectual development, commitment, and well-being. SDT's research carefully investigates constituents, within societal situations and inherent to personal growth, which promotes vigor, desire, human synthesis and welfare, and, alternately, those that add to deficiency, discontinuity, unfriendly conduct, and sadness.

Ryan and Deci (2017) wrote that since issues affecting personal growth fluctuate so extensively, it is important to concentrate on well-being, and thriving, as well as circumstances which encourage or prevent them. Furthermore, it is human nature, or in
personally developed abilities and obtained competencies, to actualize potentials and
skills to achieve larger or smaller levels of psychologically stable, societal, and
physiological operation. Hopeful possibilities soon decline due to impoverishment or
difficult human situations. To fully understand what people require from their psychical
and societal settings, and how to perform at one's potential and flourish, SDT utilizes
field investigations and empirical researches into everyday human functions.

Ryan and Deci (2017) observed that a significant subject of study in biology and
psychology is the investigation of agents which enhance growth and practical virtue in
human beings. Scientists commonly utilize the Baconian method when discerning
precise nutritional or assistance requirements of organisms. The Baconian approach
involves observing and manipulating the various needs or provisions of assumed
supplements, then evaluating the tangible results concerning improvement or
functionality. This type of research is typical in horticulture and other biological
sciences, and SDT carries this same practical perspective into the field of psychology to
analyze human improvement and progress. While studying the growth and development
of psychological processes, SDT further investigates the essential characteristics and
controls supporting the development of social behavior and its pathogenesis.

Ryan and Deci (2017) conceded that not only does SDT provide fundamental
scientific value, but its practical approach is also useful and valuable. The practicality of
SDT is that it mostly leads to how characteristics of circumstances aid or impair the
motives and contentment implicit to sufficient well-being and the regulation of oneself.
Through identification and measurement of various kinds of motivation management and
the stipulations that nurture them, one may carefully and methodically apply SDT in the
circumstances within society such as in a family, class, group of athletes, healthcare facility, digital culture, or within a company or organization. Simultaneously, SDT is quite critical considering its examination and comparison involving the sufficiency of support and impairment of individual flourishing in cultural settings. SDT's key strategy concerns direct human relations in school, work, or between a parent and a child regarding the interpretations of everyday situations in culture, politics, and economics and the way these circumstances impact a person's primary individual needs fulfillment as well as the way it nurtures growth and societal equity. The core of SDT is not relative, in that its foundation is reliant on socially and culturally universal concepts involving the primary requirements needed to promote wellness of mentality and behavior.

A Scientific and Experimental Method

Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasized that SDT is an organismic viewpoint which is verifiable through observation and experience. SDT addresses mental development, honor, and well-being as a life science through the lens of an organismic approach. SDT explicitly suggests that over time people have grown to be naturally inquisitive, extremely sociable, and highly physical creatures. Engaging proactively, grasping knowledge, regulating behavior, and obtaining unions within human associations depict personal growth in humanity. When in supportive settings people exhibit strong desires and natural inclinations, even as early as infants, to learn about, pay attention to, and obtain knowledge regarding their personal and external environments. Being intrinsically motivated equates with the desire to investigate, manage, and understand with internal competencies. However, the act of integrating and internalizing is the inclination to absorb rules and standards in society. At the center of SDT is the settings which generate
the optimum procession of this pair of profound and naturally evolving methods to progress, in addition to the circumstances which can hinder or jeopardize them.

Ryan and Deci (2017) stated that while SDT involves an active inclination for inherent motives, internalizing, and socially integrating, it is also accompanied by, and based on individual satisfying fulfillments. Naturally occurring in the pursuance to satisfy are perceptions of contentment such as "competence, autonomy, and relatedness" (Ryan & Deci, p. 5). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are predictors as well as indications of well-being and vigor, which relate to satisfaction and sincerely mirror, the most significant element of personal flourishing. SDT research documented that social contexts which provide the strongest display of emotional encouragement for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are those where people’s inquisitiveness, creativeness, potency, and kindness most expressly lives.

Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2017) reported that although these working inclinations of inherent motives and integrating developmental characteristics may seem uniquely human, they are also observable in primatial animals and other mammals. Actually, in the biological theory, the mental and emotional development of mammalians depict organization which is the universal law of the capacity which living things have to organize and advance toward increasing distinction and assimilation. In summary, individuals are naturally granted the inclinations to develop and refine oneself toward the direction of an established system and unified purpose.

A Psychological Theory

Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that it is a standard scientific practice that validation of theories occurs by the promotion and interpretation of information which
formed the principles to prove their capability to predict and govern, even in particularly unusual situations. Furthermore, a sound theoretical approach justifies the phenoms during experimentation, and methodical negotiations and enables a judgment of the intervening methods which prove to be crucial in the trials. SDT recognizes principles that can immediately inform competent human processes as it examines how empirical abilities and cultural circumstances cooperate to promote or threaten multiple patterns of individual motives and well-being over realms.

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Ryan and Deci (2017) wrote that psychologically focused theories are the most instrumental of existing theories involving behavioral aspects of humans in the contexts of reality. SDT, as a psychologically based approach, includes behaviors in the role of
the knowing or unknowing intentions or motivations that regulate that behavior. Goals and reasoning often emerge as wishes, worries, reflections, and plans, and at times are remarkable in one's consciousness and at other times rejected or guarded in opposition. An evaluation may occur through various ways such as ambiguous appraisals, observances of behavior, or physical signs. However, assessments are often conducted utilizing personal accounts. No matter the way of assessing one's beliefs and needs, they are powerful entities. To the extent of the reasoning behind deliberate (voluntary) acts is the significant issues which start or support the behaviors. The powers that drive humans, a concept involving the psychology of motivation, are paradigms for predicting and providing valuable interpretations of actions. To put it differently, one's perceptions of gratifications, payoffs, and costs (the assumed disadvantages, charges, and disappointments) is what drives behavior; consequently, knowing the established mechanics associated with carrying these mental processes is what realistically ignites a change in the way people act.

Ryan and Deci (2017) noted a significant aspect regarding mental negotiators. For instance, the weakening of an individual's ambition comes from the sense of being mastered; emotional detachment or aggressive behavior develops from an offense which causes the feeling of being unloved; gratification and sustained energy result in the sensation of skillfulness. It is by enticing a person's motivations, intentions, and anticipations or by adjusting the closest points in cultural settings that bring about to the most efficient conversion of resulting behavior. It is the ranking of the mental methods working inside the person, the things likely to change, and the powers within cultural
environments that stimulate or reduce the practices needed for the degree of investigation and practice of science which accrues knowledge of motives and behavioral modification.

Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasized that theories in psychology are in no way separate from theories in biology or reductive statements because it is through these that psychological theories will be fully connected and cultivated. Although autonomy and biology are both contingents upon distinct mechanics, actions relating to autonomy are, in biology, different from actions deriving from control. Also, permeating mental encounters affect the brain influencing inclinations toward specific incentives to act and skills for regulating behavior. Emotional or psychological experiences are not only significant, and conformable, frequently they are also the very likely cause for actions, in addition to often being the most reasonable position to mediate in cases of social behavior.

Ryan and Deci (2017), reminded that, because SDT is a psychologically based theoretical perspective, it is attentive to an individual's proactively innate abilities to choose engagement, interpretation, and action regarding externally situated circumstances concerning the characteristics, composition, and workings of a person's activity. There is a sense of the self - embraced in the perception of proactive, self-regulating engagement and operation which is the core of self-determination. SDT concentrates on the occurrences which have a bearing on acting autonomously, including those affecting a function of choice and self-validation, instead of on personal conceptions of the self, involving identity, or self-evaluation and appraisal. Events of complete volition include the absence of internal struggle and active commitment; therefore, autonomous actions demand integration.
Moreover, Ryan and Deci (2017) noted that individuals who possess capabilities for volition and self-regulation thoroughly and reflectively encounter experiences while suitably determining and controlling their actions; however, desire and self-regulatory behavior is nevertheless extremely reliant on encouraging human situations. Self-Regulatory potentials are weak to social circumstances that impede the fulfillment of need requirements and nurture restrained and guarded performance which limits the possibility for integrated and autonomous behavior.

Additionally, Ryan and Deci (2017) stated that individuals enter life with a collection of basic methods and features which signify continuous mental and emotional growth. Babies display a natural inclination to be active, as they inherently participate in their surroundings with volition. Furthermore, an innate propensity for organismic integration is also evident as the inherent desire toward growing and developing becomes apparent. Although this integrational inclination may be naturally occurring, it is likewise dependent; it needs assistance socially and environmentally for people to fulfill their essential psychologic requirements, which are "the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (p. 8). These elements represent significant psychologic fulfillments necessary for the healthful advancement of oneself while joining the environment in and about themselves. Subsequently, SDT also includes an awareness of personal requirements, preferences, and aims, as well as the experience of distinguishing among self-governance and being externally controlled. SDT examines and identifies the function of an inherent personal potential for increasing mindfulness and reflection of oneself. The possibility of awareness performs a vital part in the healthful regulation of oneself.
Human Needs

Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that historically, experimental psychology had numerous theoretical approaches which have examined ideas concerning the essential requirements of people. Many theories concentrated on physiologic concepts behind the needs process, whereas others studied the psychologic methods regarding the requirements process. However, SDT is in the latter division; this is where people conceive needs within the psychologic area. SDT's proposal is different than others which speculate on psychologic requirements since SDT declares an essential collection of elements which are psychologic, and like needs which are physiologic, these requirements are necessary for all people to achieve optimum individual performance no matter one's age of development or social environment.

Ryan and Deci (2017) stated that in SDT "needs are specifically defined as nutrients that are essential for growth, integrity, and well-being" (p. 10). Thus, a few of the exact primary physiologic requirements are elements like air, fresh H2O, an adequate diet, and being free of bodily injury as well as any concerns relating to nourishment for physical wellness and security. SDT asserts that adjacent to the needs which are physical there are essential requirements which are psychological and require satisfaction to sustain mental and emotional engagement, growth, and well-being.

Ryan and Deci (2017) maintained that the three central psychologically based necessities are "autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (p. 10). These requirements are thought of as scientific phenoms, equivalent to biological necessities in that the withholding or fulfillment of these needs have definite and calculable performance
consequences; Furthermore, the results will achieve despite a person's biased purposes or beliefs.

Autonomy

The first core requirement defined by Ryan and Deci (2017) in SDT is autonomy, and it is defined as "the need to self-regulate one's experiences and actions" (p. 10). Autonomy refers to a kind of performance connected with experiencing a sensation of volition, congruence, and integration. The state of being autonomous as in willingness is not the same as being self-reliant. The sign of being autonomous is with the approval of the behavior, in that the actions are harmonious with real beliefs and concerns. When behaving autonomously, an action entails engagement without reservation, but when beginning something that is against the will, this is an example of acting incongruently and with ambivalence. The opinion of SDT is that the self voluntarily or autonomously regulates a few deliberate behaviors and that regulation from unintegrated features of oneself or outside powers externally control other actions. In saying this, someone can nevertheless act although, not by choice or with validation of oneself. In this spirit, the self is not the same as the person.

Competence

Ryan and Deci (2017) described competence as being commonly understood as an essential component in motivational behaviors; furthermore, it is an extensively studied subject in psychological research. SDT suggests that competence relates to a person's fundamental requirement of feeling capable of mastering an ability or skill. Humans must believe they are proficient in operating with effectiveness within the relevant circumstances of their lives. Evidence of competence as a personal requirement is
concerned with interests and manipulating as well as in a broad variety of epistemological motivations as it is, of course, an innate and effortful attempt to achieve a goal. Competence stimulates many reactions in humans, on a spectrum anywhere from experts exploring the cosmos to teenagers in virtual reality competitions. However, thwarting of competence occurs in situations where the test is too arduous, there is adverse criticism in meaningful relationships which weakens one's confidence in abilities or by comparing individuals among groups.

Relatedness

Ryan and Deci (2017) proposed relatedness as the perception of being psychologically joined with other people. Relatedness is the belief that people are concerned about and care for them. Furthermore, it is the sense of importance amongst other people, and the sentiment that one belongs. Undergoing sacrificing or helping others is equivalently significant in relatedness. Homonomy is a form of relatedness which concerns being a necessary part of a group outside of one's immediate self. Homonomous means to feel connected with people who are nearby and gaining a meaningful part of cultural gatherings. Some ways that people feel relatedness and connectedness are by giving to society or bestowing kindness.

Areas of Psychological Interest and the Theories within SDT

Ryan and Deci (2017) noted that SDT's indications bridge established domains of psychological research. The differing marvels that SDT reaches involve "social, personality, developmental, and clinical psychologies and, more recently, to neuropsychology and behavioral economics" (p. 19). The sub-theories in SDT do not match immediately with standard fields of study within the broader field of psychology
but instead to various features regarding motives and psychologic synthesis. Each theory within SDT sequentially enlightens each position of the investigation, including the mechanical and the social. The ideas which make up SDT are the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), Causality Orientations Theory (COT), Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), Goal Contents Theory (GCT), and the Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT). These principles are explained in more detail as follows:

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET). Cognitive evaluation theory is defined by Ryan and Deci (2017) as a mini-theory which describes the procedures that human conditions impacts, such as in promoting or weakening, inherent motives and, sequentially, outstanding achievement and wellness. CET focuses solely on intrinsic motivation. Although intrinsic motivation is a natural inclination to develop through playing, exploring, manipulating, etc. to increase knowledge and skillfulness, this impulsive action diminishes in many environments, including the classroom. CET suggests that actions such as obtaining a reward, being evaluated, or receiving feedback have specific connotations and operational importance which forecast the influence these measures have on intrinsic motivation.

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT). Ryan and Deci (2017) described the organismic integration theory, the next mini-theory in SDT, as being concerned with the growth of extrinsically based initiatives while being integrated, and consequentially explaining how behavior deriving from extrinsic motivations develops into autonomy. OIT involves the natural inclinations to incorporate and unite social and ethnic regulation
and the circumstances in human conditions which support or hinder the ability to internalize and integrate.

Causality Orientations Theory (COT). Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that the causality orientations theory (COT) informed the aspects of SDT which involved personality through COT's "individual-difference concepts" (p. 20). This concept is representative of the developing consequences of someone communicating day by day within human contexts. Evaluating the nearly permanent features depicting someone affords the opportunity to predict many significant results.

Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT). Ryan and Deci (2017) reported that the fourth mini-theory became apparent as they reflected upon the three fundamental requirements and realized that those basic needs promoted inherent and entirely incorporated motives which influenced mental fitness and wellness; therefore, the basic psychological needs theory came to fruition. BPNT reveals the ways which the motivating and driving forces of fundamental requirements impact wellness and vigor. The maintenance of essential needs help and the frustration of basic needs threatens healthy activity on every plane of personal growth, as well as throughout various social environments and circumstances. The psychodynamics in the frustrating of needs demonstrates the progression of different kinds of mental disorders, as well as adverse physical consequences. The fulfillment of requirements influences personal stamina, as well as endurance, as it is the principal sign of well-being. Also investigated is the part that awareness plays in supporting the fulfillment of needs and hence, a complete, healthful and well-functioning individual.
Goal Contents Theory (GCT). Ryan and Deci (2017) wrote that the fifth of the mini-theories is the goal contents theory (GCT) which is concerned with the aims and aspirations of people, the relationships they have with the fulfillment of their fundamental needs, as well as well-being. Individuals carry a variety of enduring goals with them throughout their lives. Those life goals fit into two groups in that they are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated ambitions, as they are also, experiential and theoretical goals. Intrinsically motivated aspirations are goals that are compensating in and of themselves; they provide nearly immediate gratification of the core requirements for "autonomy, competence, and relatedness" (Deci & Ryan, 2017, p. 21). Individual development, significant relations with others, and giving to society are instances of these intrinsic aspirations. On the other hand, extrinsically motivated goals are those dependent upon contingency in the fulfillment of need satisfactions. These types of goals do not satisfy need requirements, but they are considered to have the potential to meet demand requirements. Gaining popularity and authority, achieving money and physical assets, and keeping oneself attractive while maintaining visible images are a few of these extrinsic aims. Investigations involving intrinsically or extrinsically motivated life ambitions and their relation to actions and wellness have revealed that goal satisfaction varies in their connection to fundamental need fulfillment and in succession to psychological wellness, which is the sequel that has withstood cross-cultural studies.

Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT). Ryan and Deci (2017) commented that the relationship motivation theory (RMT) is the newest mini-theory in SDT. Analysis frequently shows that excellent personal relations among people, both individual relationships and those in social circles are dependent on a person's capability to
encounter, not only favorableness or respect but also an autonomous concern. This same sentiment is valid from infancy into the declining years of life. RMT acknowledges that relatedness is a basic psychological requirement; it supports internalizing in human engagement, but it is also two-sided in that it is promoted or ruined by social relations. RMT includes the connectedness of the needs of relatedness and autonomy as they mesh in positive, understanding and respectively gratifying relationships.

Schools as Settings for Education and Social Growth

Ryan and Deci (2017) wrote that traditionally, children learn in schools by observing, replicating, role playing, and imagining to be the people about them, while slowly attaining competencies of being a grown up. In the past, the teachers were relatives of the students. However, instead of the relationships, natural curiosities, incentives, and inspired scholarship, more recently schools are beginning to trust more on teaching procedures and assessment tactics. In schools today, teachers are qualified adults who stand in front of a substantial number of students in class, focusing on preselected materials for transmission to the students; however, alignment of the material does not coincide with the student's developing attentions and capabilities. The curriculum is arranged according to appropriate age and timetable and authorized externally. Furthermore, the inherent foundation for participating in academics is frequently uncertain. School curriculum is often not put together to appeal to the natural motivations of children and is not significant to their existence and goals. With the top down approach in education today, most schools have become exceedingly fixated on a restricted group of academic objectives, frequently in disregard of the diverse interests, aptitudes, and the full range of mental, emotional, and cognitive requirements of students.
Characteristics of Foster Youth

There is more than 400,000 youth living in foster care throughout the U.S., in any given year, because of problems like “child abuse, neglect, parental incarceration or death, behavioral issues,” etcetera (Neal, 2017). Because of being taken from their families, living in inappropriate household environments and traveling among various temporary families, and educational facilities, foster children may suffer increasing amounts of anxiety and trials in development because of struggling to deal with excessive psychological turmoil (Neal, 2017).

Furthermore, foster children are more likely to reside in lower socioeconomic households with incomes far under the poverty level (Steine-Steele, 2015; Burley & Halpern, 2001). The average salary for families with children is $74,301, but $56,364 is the average wage in a private home with foster children (Steine-Steele, 2015). The difference in salaries is a direct reflection of non-foster parents having higher levels of education than foster parents (Steine-Steele, 2015). The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System of 2015 recorded that nearly half a million children in the United States are in foster care. Research shows that while in school a significant number of foster youth show signs of behavior problems (Maaskant, Rooij, Overbeek, Oort, Arntz, & Hermanns, 2017; Zetlin et al., 2006), delays in educational skills, and lack of success in school (Belin, et al. 2000; Zima et al., 2000; Zetlin et al., 2006). They score lower on tests, achieve lower on evaluations, quit school in higher percentages (Maaskant et al., 2017), have higher frequencies of tardiness and absences, and are overrepresented in special education courses (Neal, 2017). Maintaining paperwork on foster children is especially difficult for schools because of the high mobility of the children.
Mismanagement of documents frequently causes these students to have to retake classes to stay on the usual schedule and go on to the next grade level (Neal, 2017).

A child’s future success is dependent on their academic accomplishments (Burley & Halper, 2001). Burley and Halpern (2001) reported, using data from the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) in 1990, that there is an overrepresentation of impoverished kids in the foster system. Furthermore, above schooling, skillfulness, and self-motivation, a family’s social and economic standing is what most impacts a child’s achievement as an adult. Also discovered by Burley and Halpern (2001), is that parents with lower socioeconomic rankings are not as proficient as parents from higher socioeconomic statuses in promoting healthy habits for their children or in protecting their children from injury. Moreover, there is an association of children from lower social and economic positions with failing classes and grade retention in school, partially since kids in these circumstances do not have as much early childhood instruction as kids from higher social and economic circumstances (Burley & Halpern, 2001).

Additionally, Burley and Halpern (2001) studied scores from standardized tests of foster children in Washington state which showed that students in foster care achieve considerably worse at all grade levels studied than non-foster children. Furthermore, this disparity seems to grow wider as foster children increase in age. Moreover, the likelihood that 11th-grade children in foster care will finish high school is 57% less probable than 11th-grade students not in a foster family. Considering the issues which potentially influence the success of foster children in school is necessary for understanding what elements enable some foster youth to be more successful than others.
Foster Youth and Education – Barriers/Needs

In a qualitative research study by Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, and Fogarty (2012), eight themes arose which are critical in eliminating obstacles to educational accomplishment among foster youth. These barriers (or needs) developed from the testimonies of 43 out of the 68 Michigan students in attendance at a total of two Kidspeak gatherings. The ages of the participants ranged from 15 to 23.

The first major emerging theme is the importance of having lasting connections with concerned adults outside of school (LaCour et al., 2016; Weinberg, Oshiro, & Shea, 2014; Cheung, Lewin, & Jenkins, 2012). Some of the foster youth in the study grieved that they do not have anyone on which to depend. They stated that they have so many caseworkers that they cannot remember all of their names. Having associations with teachers as well as other grown-ups who understand their particular circumstances as students in foster care is the second central matter of interest for foster children (LaCour et al., 2016; Neal, 2017; Sugden, 2013). The foster youth reported that teachers must pay attention to what is happening with their students. Sensitivity by teachers to the learning needs of foster youth is also a principal aspect when teaching foster children (Hunter, Monroe & Garand, 2014; LaCour et al., 2016’ Sugden, 2013). The foster youth described how some students cannot learn as quickly as others which can cause them to fall behind the other students. The fourth major obstacle in educational attainment of foster youth is getting the needed funds for instructional necessities which may include supplies or even transportation (Kirk & Day, 2011; Neal, 2017). The fourth major obstacle, as described by the foster students, is the importance of participating in extracurricular events, and how placement instability prevented them from engaging in
normal school activities like sports (Neal, 2017; Sugden, 2013). The sixth theme which arose is their concern for personal safety and the value of a safe school environment. Many of the foster children mentioned bullying and getting picked on which made them feel unsafe at school. They wanted more hall monitors at school. The next and seventh interest is the school showing regard for the psychological problems of foster children (Sugden, 2013). The foster youth expressed the frustrations and stress they felt from being in foster care and how this caused them not to be able to focus in class. Finally, the eighth theme involved receiving assistance to survive independently (Kirk & Day, 2011). Some of their concerns regarding support for sustaining independence included wondering where they will go until college begins, what they will do after turning 18, where will they stay when school is out for the summer, etc. However, the most reported concern was not having a relationship with a concerned and caring grown up who worries about them.

Relationships

According to Day et al. (2012), the lack of caring relationships with adults, both within and outside of school, was the most pervasive problem among these foster youths. Foster youth wish for constant relations with considerate grown-ups external of the school who recognize how to sustain academic achievement. The foster children participating in this study were high school students currently in foster care and college students previously in a foster family. The foster kids in this research study believe that educational attainment is critically reliant upon the emotional assistance and educational promotion that connections with caring adults can offer (Day et al., 2012; Neal, 2017; Sugden, 2013).
Foster youth, as conveyed by Day et al. (2012), need educators who are not only conscious of their trials and accessible throughout the school hours, but who are also thoughtful and knowledgeable. One of the participants told a story about two teachers helping them realize that they could go to college, and this being the first time they realized it; moreover, this support also transformed their mindset. While other foster students told about the forfeit in their educational accomplishment is because of the absence of helpful, capable teachers. Many of the participants depicted how care from teachers assisted them in overcoming the confrontation of academic trials which allowed them to thrive in school.

Participants in the research by Day et al. (2012) communicated their idea of pairing foster youth with mentors who can render direction and assistance to foster children long after the closure of the case would be most beneficial. Also proposed by the participants is planning and positioning the young people in care that they are with siblings or kin.

A qualitative study by Neal (2017) examined the contexts through “academic resilience and theory of care” which served as a lens for understanding the literary ambitions of students in a foster family as well as the adult position of guiding and reliability (p. 243). Neal (2017) utilized a survey of 57 respondents and interviewed 11 participants who produced four unique themes.

The first topic issues which arose in Neal’s (2017) concerned inherent qualities associated with academic resiliency and accomplishment included being smart, goal driven, and self-controlled, as well as having high educational ambitions. The interview data revealed inherent qualities as being the purpose for student’s educational
achievement and registering for college. The participating foster students mentioned how they have long had a fondness in gaining knowledge. Many of them stated how they were determined to attain success in school. The second theme related to the academic success of the foster students in the interviews revealed that their motivation for achieving academic success apparently arose out of adverse places. Meaning that the foster youth partially succeeded because they were determined to show individuals they were wrong about them, not to end up like their parents, or in the way of resisting the life they grew up with while overpowering challenges in life to achieve academic success.

The third finding was the importance of extracurricular activities to construct encouragement, growth, academic success, and increase self-worth. The fourth theme revealed the necessity of grownups in supplying support in leadership, emotional reactions, and constancy.

All participants in the study by Neal (2017) identified relations, educators, friends’ parents or people from other establishments who held high academic expectations for them (Neal, 2017). These supporters eventually offered somewhere safe for them to wrestle with their particular emotional disappointments and support their preparation in furthering their education. Acquiring a bond with a thoughtful grown-up was a helpful way for this set of foster youth to sustain their energies to go to an upper-level college or university.

Along the same lines, Gilligan (1998) emphasized the significance of teacher relationships in helping to make up for the absence of encouraging relations with other grown-ups in their lives. Aiding students in becoming self-confident, as well as identifying healthy habits in dealing with pressures are ways that teachers assist students
in recovering and coping with traumatic experiences, like being sexually abused. Normality, routines, and the feeling of being safe at school can be healing for the vulnerability of a child experiencing trauma.

In a qualitative study by Stein-Steele (2015), involving the perspective of the foster parent and their role in the academics of the foster child, Stein-Steele interviewed 12 foster parents. Stein-Steele (2015) revealed four emerging themes from the research. The first evolving topic involved the provision of a stable environment to sustain the foster youth’s need for security (nourishment, clothes, housing, guidelines, boundaries), relationships (love, belongingness, traditions), and self-respect (esteem and school achievement). The next theme concerned the establishment of a stable environment to aid educational development by recognizing the children’s social, psychological, and academic requirements. The third issue emphasized the importance of initiating and upholding collaborative communication with the foster youth’s school for assistance and direction. The final topic highlighted the importance of supporting and promoting the educational needs of the foster youth. Stein-Steele’s (2015) study underscored the dire significance of schools and foster parents in providing a stable environment for foster children, in addition to partaking in frequent interactions between foster parents and teachers. Communication between home and the school holds power to positively influence the achievement of the children in foster care both behaviorally and academically. A foster child's growth is irreversibly changed or suspended by their experiences of foster care; it is crucial that the child's teachers, school leaders, and foster parents labor, yet further, to focus and direct the specific insufficiencies of these kids persistently.
Teaching Strategies

Comparatively, Day et al. (2012) wrote about an emerging theme regarding the importance of young people in foster care to have accommodating, innovative teachers who are responsive to distinct educational needs. They need teachers who will offer students who fall behind the chance to regain lost credits or skills. Also wanted by the foster children in the study are for teachers to implement classroom practices involving different learning modalities; take full advantage of retaining information by scheduling rests throughout the school day; and offer more chances for instruction involving active participation. The viewpoint of one of the foster youth was that some children get behind the other kids in the class because they do not learn as fast. This kid’s idea in resolving this matter is to offer more programs where students can acquire knowledge, so they do not get abandoned in their educational endeavor. Also wanted by the foster children in this study, by Day et al. (2012), is more physical activity in class because many lessons require being sedentary for long periods.

In a study by LaCour, McGlawn, and Dees (2016), data revealed valuable practices in creating positive classroom environments to sustain the requirements of foster children and support their educational attainment. Sixty-one elementary and middle school teachers who were currently teaching grades ranging from kindergarten to sixth-grade, in an Arkansas public education system, were surveyed using open-ended response questions. The purpose of the study was to analyze the views of teachers regarding the most efficient procedures to support foster children in the classroom academically.
LaCour et al. (2016) collected data from sixty-one teachers to discover perceptions and best classroom applications to satisfy the needs of foster youth best. The researchers uncovered major themes involving proactive discipline methods to meet the needs of the foster child. All of which are believed to create a positive classroom environment. Researchers analyzed the survey items with an open-coding system. Categories were established and combined to produce themes. The key issues were: conversations (Kirk & Day, 2011); social connections; role playing; and interaction with classmates (Sugden, 2013). These findings divulged that meeting the needs of foster children is vitally dependent on the relationship amongst the teacher and students in a proactively managed classroom setting.

LaCour et al. (2016) wrote that the most powerful theme which surfaced in this study was the coordination of discussions in class. Class discussions grant opportunities to facilitate student understanding of how to appropriately respond to other people. During class discussions, books can be employed to guide discussions about problem-solving using characters in the books.

Kirk & Day (2011) designed a study to increase college access for foster youth. The investigation involved 38 young people in foster care who participated in a summer camp. The inquiry disclosed the importance of role-models and conversations with foster care alumni presently attending college. The speakers and counselors that empowered the youth had previously been in a foster family and spoke of the challenges and adversities they overcame as well as their recent accomplishments. Seeing and hearing the foster care alumni motivated the foster youth. They could see their own goal of attending college attainable.
LaCour et al. (2016) also cited examples of personal connections made during conversations. These researchers noted the significance of class discussions which cultivate the development of relationships; the teachers in this study believed that positive teacher-student relationships are critical. Relationship development happens by teachers helping students to feel welcome, cared for, and safe.

LaCour et al. (2016) recorded role play as another theme in their study; they found this technique to promote the management of a positive classroom. Correctly modeling social skills and how to handle tough situations is a critical component in the creation of a proactive classroom situation. Counselors may also educate students on these types of issues.

One implication for schools offered by Sugden (2013) is that if children are having difficulty in acquiring, handling or keeping friends, the student may need suitable mediations to cultivate their social abilities. Interventions may comprise of chances “for lunchtime or after-school groups or extra-curricular clubs” (Sugden, 2013, p. 378).

LaCour et al. (2016) referred to the next theme associated with a positive classroom atmosphere as peer share. Peer share is a time where students have opportunities to work with diverse classmates and in various group settings. Working with different and assorted others gives students the opportunity to learn how to get along well with people unlike themselves and make friends. Friendships offer chances for students to acquire knowledge, build relationships, support each other and share mealtimes (Sugden, 2013).

LaCour et al. (2016) noted encouragement and praise as another critical element in the creation of a positive classroom environment. Encouragement and praise must be
sincere and personalized and the same for all students. Furthermore, to be successful, praise and encouragement must be rendered regularly and dependably (LaCour, 2016; Sugden, 2013).

Also documented by LaCour et al. (2016) were examples of positive and negative homework practices. For homework practices to contribute to the positive classroom environment, teachers must be understanding about the trials of completing homework encountered by foster youth. According to the teacher survey, homework should be meaningful, fair, not graded, and personal, whereas the student can take part in their progress as a learner.

Positive homework examples cited by LaCour et al. (2016) are assignments which repeat a skill already understood, is not too extensive, and allows the foster youth to demonstrate an ability to the foster parent. If the foster child and parent have a good working relationship, foster parents can assist the foster children with homework assignments. Homework time can help the bond between foster parent and child. Furthermore, if the homework can be done autonomously by the foster youth, this experience is positive as well.

Regarding homework, Day et al. (2012), conveyed descriptions of foster youth expressing the need in having a person to support them with their homework assignments. With the help and support from someone, this particular foster youth maintained a good GPA. On the other hand, another foster child described a situation where no one cared if they went to school or did their homework, so this youth did not do their homework which eventually led to skipping school.
In juxtaposition, LaCour et al. (2016) relayed some of the negative aspects of homework are assignments discovered in the study. Homework which is too hard and cannot be accomplished alone or with little assistance, a lot of homework which takes up too much time after school, and homework resulting in grade penalizations are negative examples of homework assignments. The stimulation of children’s vestibular systems occurs while running and playing; there is a need for running and playing in the afternoons and evenings after school. Time after school is also an important time for foster youth to form bonds with parents and children in the foster family.

An interpretive phenomenological analysis by Sugden (2013) involving a purposive sample of six ‘Looked-After Children’ (children in foster care) between eight and nine years of age discovered three major themes concerning what supports their learning in school. Those three items depict what school is to them as a place where they are accepted; a place where they can make choices; and a place which personalizes their learning (Day et al., 2012). Every participant in the study established that the teacher is the primary person supporting their academic progress. The participants also viewed their teacher as immensely meaningful concerning the rank of everyday assistance and praise (LaCour, 2016; Sugden, 2013).

School, for these foster children, is an accepting place where they find acknowledgment; this is the first arising theme in Sugden’s (2013) study. These kids see school as a constant and dependable environment which affords them the prospect of collectively belonging to a social group. Moreover, they see the school as a community which offers occasions for playing. Sugden (2013) recapped this theme as follows: “belonging, friends, play and teachers” (p. 373).
Sugden (2013) described the second issue emerging in the study as school offering chances for foster children to make choices concerning their life; this theme captured “academic success and resources and opportunities” (p. 374). Interviews with foster children revealed that a school is a place where they can declare some power over the time ahead of them. In the eyes of these kids, school poses an environment where there are many instructions and involvements, but they can still decide which events are most enjoyable to them. In this way, school nurtures their capability to establish opinions and possess a personal declaration. At school, their classmates and the grownups about them attend to what they say. The children learn to acquire ideas regarding how best to accomplish an assignment, obtain encouragement, as well as which kinds of teachings they like most. Replies from some participants indicated that school offers occasions for transformation, for instance, the opportunity to start over after a change in placement and schools, as well as to advance their abilities.

The third theme uncovered by Sugden (2013) summarized the significance of: “the child presenting information regarding their difficulties/areas of lower confidence and considering what could be put in place to increase their confidence” (p. 374). Every participant maintained the value of their school personally supporting them, comprehending their struggles, and customizing their instruction. Each foster child in this study established that the first grown up who championed their academic improvement was their teacher. These students also observed that the immediate assistance presented by teachers was enormously substantial regarding the meaning of daily help and encouragement.
Cheung, Lwin, and Jenkins (2012) led an investigation in Canada involving data from the Ontario Looking After Children project. The researchers examined the relationship between specific foster care placements and educational attainment of foster youth. The researchers investigated the following three hypotheses. The first theory analyzed was foster parent’s home-based and school-based participation and support being the reason that foster children residing in various foster homes demonstrate unique relationships of educational attainment. The second hypothesis investigated by the researchers was the placement of foster children in foster homes with higher levels of literacy possibly elucidating the dissimilarities among foster children from different arrangements. The third hypothesis noted was if varied educational expectations of foster parents will clarify dissimilarities among foster children within the same foster home.

The Cheung et al. (2012) study discovered two significant conclusions. The first finding concerns the proof that the discrepancies among educational attainment in foster youth are a result of the variances in the individual foster youth, as well as differences among the placements. Precisely 15% of the gap in educational attainment of the foster youth attributes to the discrepancies of foster homes. However, the rest of the difference in the scores of young people in care are justified by individual dissimilarities in the youth.

The second result involves the importance of foster parent commitment and dedication which encompasses home engagement and a high-level literacy environment in the foster home situation as well as holding high educational expectations for foster youth (Chueng, 2012). Cheung et al. (2012) implicated three procedures which may be
implemented in policies and practices to enhance educational results among foster youth. First, curricula which focuses on foster placement procedures which support foster parents in taking an active part in the foster child’s educational involvement deems to be important. By becoming increasingly concerned and well-informed regarding educational endeavors, foster parents assist in supporting the education of foster children. A suitable level of participation by foster parents could aid in identifying challenges which can be attended to efficiently. Possible interventions in accomplishing this task are programs in which foster parents are educated about successful methods to help with homework and encouraged to create a literacy setting in the foster home. Perhaps the most important intervention procedure outlined by Cheung et al. (2012) was the need to assist foster parents in understanding the importance of holding high academic expectations for foster children. The assistance of extending high educational expectations is vital to the educational success of foster children (Neal, 2017). Additionally, foster parents must know that their academic expectancies should correspond to the ability level of the child.

One limitation in the study by Cheung et al. (2012) is that although the outcome presented a relationship between high educational attainment and more involved foster parents, it could be that high-level attaining foster children provoke more attention from the foster parent. In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the importance of focusing on foster home procedures to promote an increase in educational results of foster youth.

In a study involving 32 foster youth, Happer, McCreadie, and Aldgate (2006) asked the children how to encourage the academic results of foster youth. The following
five elements arose in this study concerning what supported these participants to do well; they include involvement with caring individuals; experiencing a stable environment; people having right beliefs about your future; receiving hope, courage, and support; and the ability to contribute and accomplish.

Day et al. (2012) reported that school attainment of young people in care involves issues regarding educational and placement stability. Educational and placement stability are familiar topics of difficulty in the academic attainment of foster youth; however, less known problems which arose and link to school and placement stability is the importance of extracurricular activities. School and placement instability not only causes problems with academics but also limits afterschool activities and extracurricular events for foster youth. Lack of involvement in after school activities and extracurricular events due to moving around and changing placements is a disadvantage for young people in foster care. Some of the foster youth participating in this study explained the way that unpredictability in placements keeps them from being involved in activities involving school. The fostered young people who were involved in extra activities outside of school described feeling a closer bond to school and how this is a cushion to relieve undesirable home-based occurrences. According to these foster youth, some children will do anything to stay away from home if they can. In this way, schools are sanctuaries to many children and even home for some. The foster youths in this investigation testified the necessity in making school and instruction an at home, helpful environment.

The foster youth participants in the study by Neal (2017), also reported the importance of school fellowships and clubs. The associations established in schools and churches offer optimistic diversions in the lives of foster youth. There is a struggle in
finding sufficient financial and emotional backing while sustaining stability in their educational lives. Associations such as extracurricular and after school activities fulfill the desire for a trusting location in which to communicate, as well as the need for connections with support systems. Programs offered in schools and outside of schools including clubs, athletics, drama, churches, etc. help youth to engage in happenings that are constructive and removes them from the sorrow and anguish they may feel in their homes.

Psychological Support

Day et al. (2012) relayed the need, as reported by the participants in the study, in accessibility to suitable mental health amenities. School-based health services are shown to increase the chance of obtaining psychological health services for foster youth. Furthermore, there are associations between school-based health services and fewer behavior issues, a decrease of violence in school, and an increase in attendance and standardized test scores. Numerous participants in this study attested to impending psychological well-being issues negatively affecting their accomplishment in school, in addition to being prescribed medications in the place of mental-health treatment for psychological trauma. Moreover, one youth reported during the interview that they did not find out they were dyslexic or had test anxiety until they were in their third year of college. For this youth, the lack of a diagnosis while in school and constantly having to redo work tore down their confidence. Attentive teachers who are aware of the specific needs of their students is a necessity in surmounting their challenges in academic attainment.
Bernedo, Salas, Ruentes, and Garcia-Martin (2014) conducted a research investigation which examined the degree of impulsiveness/inattentiveness and behavioral difficulties of fostered young people in a household or educational setting. The investigators juxtaposed the opinions teachers and foster parents involved with the foster youth and established if behavioral issues and impulsiveness/inattentiveness may link to sex, maturity, and mistreatment. Statistics revealed that a significant percentage of foster children fall within the normal limits for conduct issues; however, it remains that a substantial number of foster children’s behavior is in the limited or clinical scale for conduct. Bernedo et al. (2014) wrote that many findings concur that high quantities of behavior difficulties arise in foster children. A significant discovery was that teachers in the study recognized more internalizing behavioral issues than did the foster parents; although, foster parents and teachers agreed on the proportion of externalizing behaviors in the foster children. Regarding impulse control and attention problems, foster parents observed a greater amount of issues with these behaviors than educators. Concerning inattention issues in foster children, researchers highlighted the necessity of support in this area, especially for foster parents and children.

Further research suggestions outlined by Bernedo et al. (2014) underscored the need for the enactment of programs to intervene for children before, after, and during foster care placement. The researchers stated that interventions should not only focus on foster children but educators as well. Teachers need assistance in developing abilities to handle behavioral issues most likely to exist in foster children. The findings in this study exposed the necessity in designing intervention curricula for schools to aid children in foster care to adjust to the school situations, in addition to helping educators work with
foster children. Teachers receive virtually no training which focuses on the requirements of foster children. In addition to the assistance that social workers might present, teachers should be supported to improve the capability of addressing the demands of students in foster care.

Safety

Another theme from the research by Day et al. (2012) is the worry about individual protection and well-being in school and out of school and how this has undesirable impacts on the academics of foster youth. Some participants said that school violence and bullying threaten their safety. Because of the violence and intimidation at school, this frequently requires additional officials for supervision in the halls. Still, other foster youth described how the disregard of the mistreatment they were suffering at home forced them to make choices proving to be unfavorable to their learning. Running away to escape the beatings is among some of the detrimental decisions made by foster youth. Another foster youth recounted a story about their back hurting during class because of a thrashing they received at home. Personal safety at home and school are issues affecting the academic achievement of foster youth at school. The reasons they reported that some foster youth quit school is that of unhappiness, low self-respect, victimization, or others gossiping about them. Foster youth cease caring because of personal issues, which goes along with low self-regard. Issues faced by foster youth which make it hard to focus and impedes learning are trying to conform, learning and attention problems, stress, and other disturbances in school. For these reasons, grades suffer. The participants in this study believe that teachers must be aware of their students and they should inquire about what is happening when their grades drop.
Finances

In the interviews conducted by Day et al. (2012) the foster youth reported the absence of fundamental necessities for school and how it thwarts their educational success. Limiting to school involvement and scholarly achievement are necessary items for the school such as clothes and books, as well as transportation. Some unmet requirements for foster youth are due to issues concerning budget constraints and the closing of area schools. One of the foster youth stated that they are staying with foster parents, and although their foster parents are good folks, they must dress in three-year-old clothes, and wear shoes that have tears in them. When they go to school, children tease them because they do not have the money to purchase things. Although they want to prepare for school, because it starts soon, they cannot get ready for school because of the lack of money.

Moreover, Day et al. (2012) the foster youth interviewed reported that their money stopped when they turned 18-years old. In addition to the numerous barriers to high school completion which were mentioned by the participants, another a huge concern is the transition from high school to college. There was no one to take them to college, shop for their college dorms, or help them find a job. The foster youth participants outlined the need for programs which support young people in foster care who are emancipating, in going to college, as well as instruction concerning how to take care of themselves on their own.

Applicability of SDT in the classroom

Gillet, Berjot, Vallerand, & Amoura (2012) conducted two research studies to ascertain how a supervisors’ autonomy support and a person’s global motivation can
impact circumstantial motivation and in turn can predict interests and intents to quit the pursuit. The first study investigated in what way competitors’ global motivation autonomy and discernments of autonomous encouragement from their trainer foretold their circumstantial autonomous motivation regarding the athletic pursuit. Also, the researchers observed the position of autonomous motivation in athletics as a forecaster of attentiveness and intent to quit an athletic pursuit. The second study set out to reproduce the results of the first study, although in a school environment to increase the validity and generalization of the investigation. Therefore, duplicating the results from the first survey, in the context of a school setting, offers significant proof for the soundness of the paradigm.

The results from this study by Gillet et al. (2012) suggested that environmental aspects like trainer and instructor “autonomy support and global motivation” mutually forecast relative motivations which also predicts interests and intentions of quitting. Therefore, the results from this research study validated that settings for autonomous motivation forecasts fluctuations in interests and intents of quitting.

In a research study involving three high schools, Mih & Mih (2013) administered a self-determination questionnaire packet to a sample size of 174 students. The reason for this research study was to find out whether a student’s perception of their teacher’s habits predicts a pupil’s belief they can succeed academically, their belief about themselves academically and their expectation for achievement and if these perceptions predict their employment in learning, as well as their implied educational accomplishment. The outcome of the study revealed that supporting autonomous motivation influences the attributes of educational regulation. Moreover, healthier
mental performance links to high intensities of self-determination. Also, the value of a person’s understanding is related to the degree in which they are self-determined. Mih & Mih (2013) explained that increased self-determined motivation relates to many positive results, such as their expectation of succeeding. Furthermore, for students to attempt an endeavor, they must have confidence that they can complete the task successfully. A student’s expectation of achieving impacts their desire to participate in scholarship and educational adjustment.

This research by Mih and Mih (2013), in addition to previous research investigations, highlights the belief that the engagement of pupils throughout the instructive process and the degree of their development as autonomous students rests partially on, the excellence of the instructor’s autonomy support. To be autonomy supportive rather than controlling, a teacher must give guidance and organize student learning, while simultaneously helping students to acquire concrete foundations of autonomous motivation, like the internalization of principles (Mih & Mih, 2013).

The second implication of the research study by Mih and Mih (2013) posited that schools’ priorities must be in helping students to develop great self-perceptions concerning academics and gaining knowledge. Mih and Mih (2013) suggested the application of merits like warm-heartedness, kindness, compassion, the devotion of time and care, as well as being emotionally available, to be significant in developing an accurate view of one’s academic identity. The third implication noted in this study is that an adolescent’s emotional involvement is especially delicate when immersed in educational events. A pupil’s eagerness, cheerfulness, and ease throughout an
educational endeavor appear to be formed by their judgment of their academic self and perfected by their perception of being autonomously supported.

How My Study Will Add to the Literature:

1. Sugden (2013) stated that further research is needed to shed more light on the opinions of foster children regarding school and academic support.

2. Hunter, Monroe, & Garand (2014) stated “future research should include a mixed-methods approach to include qualitative data for richer narratives of the educational challenges of foster youths, as well as the promotive services that foster youths deem to be most effective” (p. 24)

3. Pecora (2012) wrote, “Thus there are ways to improve these youth outcomes by addressing major barriers and filling gaps in youth support” (p. 1128).

4. Bernedo et al. (2014) wrote about the need for designing “school intervention programs to help foster children adapt to the school environment and to facilitate the work of teachers” (p. 48). The researchers in this study also made the point that teachers do not get adequately trained to address the requirements of children in foster care and that teachers need to improve the preparation for meeting the needs of foster children in school.

5. Although there are multiple studies concerning foster children and education, my study will determine the level of autonomy support perceived by foster children in the classroom. Then followed up with interviews to discuss the foster youth’s perceived autonomy support, and their perspectives concerning autonomy support in the classroom and how it affects their motivation and achievement. The results from the interviews can be utilized to inform classroom and school practices to
better support the educational endeavors of foster children which influences their academic outcomes. Thus, giving deeper insight into the classroom practices that motivate foster children to learn.

6. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), intrinsic motivation is an indicator of the natural human inclination to learn. They wrote that some classrooms spark intrinsic motivation while others frustrate it. From the viewpoint of foster children, this research study will add to the body of knowledge in curriculum and instruction as to how to best reach foster children while simultaneously reaching all students in the classroom.

7. Interviewing foster children about their self-determination provides the potential to gain greater insight and understanding of how self-determination relates to the school and the classroom concerning the foster child, as well as for breaking down barriers in educational attainment to overcome obstacles standing in their path to a successful future.

8. Motivations are on a spectrum ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation. Asking foster youth questions during the interviews which involve teacher behaviors shown to be autonomy-supportive and those known to be controlling to understand better how foster children perceive teacher behaviors and motivation. By obtaining examples and personal stories of ways in which foster children see teacher practices or instructional strategies promoting self-determination (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) will add to the body of knowledge on how teachers can best support foster children in their educational endeavor from a curriculum and instruction viewpoint.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The problem is the lower educational attainment of students in foster care or students who have been in foster care than their peers. There is a need for more literature about the perceptions of foster students and the self-determination theory to inform teachers about the implementation of the self-determination theory in the classroom.

There are two purposes for this study. The first purpose is to understand how students in foster care or those who have been in foster care perceive autonomy support in the classroom(s). The second goal is to understand the perceptions of foster children as to how a teacher’s autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement.

The outcome of this investigation will be shared with school leaders and educators of foster children to create interventions which support the autonomy of foster children in the classroom. This study is a qualitative inquiry utilizing a questionnaire and interviews with foster children and former foster children to understand their perceptions of autonomy support in the classroom as it relates to the self-determination theory and how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement.

Research Questions

The research questions that will guide this study are:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom?
RQ2: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement?

Sample Description

I have a particular interest in educating foster children. Being a teacher for twenty years, I have taught many children in foster care. From the perspective of a teacher, I am aware of the problems and struggles of teachers and foster children, which exist within the educational platform. Therefore, as the interviewer and an instrument of this research study, I am conscious of my bias. Regardless of my past experiences with foster children, I will maintain an investigative distance throughout the study. Furthermore, I believe that my experiences as a teacher of foster children and former foster children will contribute to my ability to understand and describe perceptions in this study.

Protection of Students

I will utilize purposeful sampling and snowball sampling to obtain names of foster children with whom I have had no previous contact. Because multiple foster families live in the county that I teach, the snowball sampling strategy will begin within the school where I teach. I will not select former students or foster families as participants in my research.

Every individual participant in this research will be informed about the purpose of the research study. All participants will sign an Informed Consent Form. The names of each participant will be changed to false names and will remain confidential. The recordings of the interviews will always remain locked in a container and stored in a safe location with the researcher. Treating each participant, child, and everyone involved in
this research endeavor with respect and dignity, as not to harm their self-esteem or self-worth is a priority.

Research Design

This qualitative research design was carefully chosen to explore the perceptions of foster children regarding their experiences in school about the self-determination theory. Qualitative research looks at how a social experience gives meaning and reality in accordance to how the participant understands it (Creswell, 2013). Narrative inquiry researchers are to hear people's accounts with an eye to recognize innovative opportunities within that experience (Chase, 2011).

The method for this qualitative study includes a questionnaire and interviews with current or former foster children. This narrative inquiry will include a Learning Climate questionnaire and interviews to examine perspectives on how best to intervene on behalf of foster children to promote self-determination of foster children in school. The semi-structured interview is a formal interview in which the interviewer develops and follows a guide but has the freedom to deviate from the handbook if the researcher deems it is necessary (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured interview includes open-ended questions and instructions for interviewers regarding related topics if the discussion strays from the agenda (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Recording of the semi-structured interviews followed by the transcription of the interviews to analyze the data will transpire (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006).

Narrative inquiry encompasses an awareness of life events as described by those who experience them (Chase, 2011). As the narrative researcher collects information during thorough interviews, they transform the relationship from “interviewee-
interviewer” to that of narrator and listener (Chase, 2011, p. 423). Narrative analysis interviews necessitate a change from the usual qualitative research manner of requesting research participants to generalize about their experiences to asking for specific accounts (Chase, 2011). Narrative inquiry commands a change from the standard practice of treating the interview agenda as a structure or semi-structure for the interview to employing the meeting schedule as a program that “may or may not” be valuable if one follows the narrator's description (Chase, 2011, p. 423). Narrative interviewing requires an intense transaction with the narrator as well as the patience to help narrators to examine recollections and acquire a deeper meaning of their encounters (Chase, 2011).

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval will be attained before conducting this research study. After the IRB approval from Mercer University is attained, the IRB application will be submitted to the selected research institutions. Consent will be obtained from the superintendent of the school system as well as from the guardians of the foster children or former foster children.

Data Collection

The sampling methodology utilized in this study will be purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative research sampling strategy (Creswell, 2007). The participant, as well as the parent or guardian, will receive an email containing a link to the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Also included in the email will be proper consent forms designed by the IRB office. After all appropriate permissions are obtained according to IRB guidelines, the researcher will contact the participant for an interview.

Snowball sampling will also be utilized in this study. In snowball sampling, also referred to as chain referral sampling, the researcher will identify foster children of
interest from individuals who know of people who know of cases which are information rich (Creswell, 2007). Snowball sampling allows the researcher to choose the most desirable cases which will offer the richest information (Patton, 1990). This begins by asking people who are well-situated (Patton, 1990). The snowball grows as new information-rich cases accumulate by talking to people (Patton, 1990).

The data collection process will involve four phases. The first step, as explained earlier, will be purposeful sampling, or snowball sampling, which will be utilized to identify potential participants. As potential participants are located, the researcher will send an email to the potential participant which includes the proper forms to obtain appropriate IRB permission. Also included in the email will be a link to the Learning Climate questionnaire. The second phase of data collection will be gathering information from the Learning Climate questionnaires. After the potential participant agrees to participate in the study, they will complete the Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ). The researcher will then retrieve the information and confirm that appropriate permission was obtained. Next, the researcher will evaluate the participant’s answers on the Learning Climate Questionnaire. The researcher will begin contacting those foster youth or former foster youth interested in an interview. The third phase will consist of interviews, and the fourth and final stage will be documentation review.

During the second phase of data collection, the researcher will email the Learning Climate questionnaire to the foster youth or former foster youth and their parents along with a parental consent form via another link. To measure the overall learning climate of a student with several teachers, the participant should answer the questions on the 15-item version of the Learning Climate questionnaire.
The third step is the interviews which will be carried out in person (if possible) and will last approximately one to one and a half hours in length. An interview guide will be prepared and will consist of a set number of open-ended questions derived from the Learning Climate questionnaire as well as more focused questions for each participant involving achievement and motivation. The questions will be the same for each participant. While the interview will be unstructured, the research questions will bind the interview (Josselson, 2013). The goal of the interview is to examine the whole person regarding his or her educational experience about self-determination, which is the heart of this investigation (Josselson, 2013).

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. While transcribing, the recordings will be listened to several times and field notes will be logged (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The interview questions will be memorized so that eye contact can be maintained during the interview. The open-ended questions are outlined in the Interview Protocol table.

To be prepared, I will study related topics in case the conversation deviates from the agenda. Although I will prepare for a structured interview, spontaneous storytelling and oral history will be welcomed. Stories will be encouraged during the interviews, as these incidents of natural storytelling will also be recorded (Creswell, 2007). I will be sure to obtain relevant information and valuable qualitative data from the interviewee by practicing and researching semi-structured interviewing techniques.

The interview protocol will be studied by the committee members as revisions are welcomed. Suggestions and revisions by committee members will be included in the
final interview agenda. Participants or guardians will complete an Informed Consent Form and a questionnaire.

The interview questions and agenda are as follows:

1. I am a teacher and I am doing research to find out how teachers can best help foster children or former foster children in the classroom. I want you to know that everything that you tell me is confidential, even your name. To write my report from our conversation, I will make up a name for you, so I do not want you to worry about that. Everything that you say is confidential. Do you understand what I mean by confidential? During this interview, I would like for you to reflect on your classes thus far in this school year, or you can even think back on experiences you have had in school in the past.

2. We are going to begin with some basic questions which are based on the questionnaire you completed. When you were answering the questionnaire, you could have been thinking of all your teachers, several teachers or a specific teacher. I noticed that on number 2 you put _____ for I feel that my instructor provides me choices and options. What kinds of choices and options does your teacher(s) give you? How does this affect your desire to want to do the work and learn or not work and learn the concept/skill?

3. For number 3 on the questionnaire, you chose ______ concerning – ‘I feel understood by my instructor.’ What were you thinking about when you chose this answer? Can you describe your relationships with your teachers? Do you think your relationships with teachers help, hinder or have no effect on your learning? Do you think being understood by your instructor can affect your grade in the class? Do you think
being understood by your instructor affects your motivation to want to learn and be successful in class?

4. The next statement is, ‘I am able to be open with my instructor during class.’ For that statement you put ______. What were you thinking of when you chose this response? Do you have an example or a story to tell?

5. I see that you put ____ for ‘My instructor conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.’ Were you thinking of an incidence when you chose this answer? If so, will you tell me about it? Do you think that whether your teacher shows that they have confidence in you can affect your grade in the class? Do you think whether your teacher shows that they have confidence in you affects your desire to learn the subject matter?

6. For ‘I feel that my teacher accepts me’ you responded with _____. Can you tell me about why you chose this response?

7. You chose ____ for ‘My instructor encouraged me to ask questions.’ In what ways does/doesn’t your teacher encourage you to ask questions? Are you thinking of a certain experience that you have had with a teacher encouraging you or discouraging you to ask questions? If so, will you tell me about it? How do you think your teacher either encouraging you or discouraging you to ask questions can influence your desire to learn the information in the class? Do you think that by your teacher encouraging or discouraging you to ask questions will affect your achievement or grade/score in the subject? How?
8. For ‘I feel a lot of trust in my instructor’ you chose ______. Why do you think it is that you do or do not trust your instructor? How can a teacher be trustworthy? Do you think if a teacher is trustworthy that this will help you to achieve in their class?

9. Regarding the statement, ‘My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully’ you chose ______. How do you think this could help you to achieve? Does this motivate you to do well in their class?

10. For the next statement, you chose _____ for ‘My instructor listens to how I would like to do things.’ Is there time in the class for your teacher to listen to how you would like to do things? When is that? What kinds of things do you get to or would you like to express your opinion about how you would like to do things?

11. For the statement ‘My teacher handles people’s emotions very well,’ you responded _____. What were you thinking of when you chose this response? Do you remember a particular time when your teacher did/did not handle someone’s emotions well? How did this make you feel when your teacher responded in this way? Do you think this could have an effect on your motivation to succeed in the class?

12. Question thirteen on the questionnaire states, ‘I feel that my instructor cares about me as a person.’ You responded ______. Because you believe that your teacher cares/does not care about you as a person, how can this affect your motivation in that teacher’s class?

13. Question fourteen on the questionnaire says, ‘I don’t feel very good about the way my teacher talks to me.’ You responded ______. Why did you choose this response? Do you remember a time when your teacher spoke disrespectfully to you?
How do you think the way your teacher talks to you can affect your motivation and achievement?

14. Question fifteen on the questionnaire reads, ‘My instructor tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.’ And, you responded _______. Can you describe times in class when your teacher tried to understand how you saw things before suggesting a new way? Do you think by your teacher trying to understand how you see things before suggesting a new way to do things can affect the grade you get in the class? Do you think this can change your motivation about doing the work or learning in the class?

15. The last question on the questionnaire reads, ‘I feel able to share my feelings with my teacher.’ You chose _______. Why did you choose this response? Were you thinking of a particular time? Do you think being able to share your feelings with your teachers could affect your success in that class? How do you think this can affect your motivation and achievement?

The interview questions are grouped according to the numerical order of the questionnaire. The researcher will analyze the answers to the questions to find a pattern concerning teacher behaviors which promote autonomous motivation and those teacher behaviors which promote controlled motivation. The researcher also developed questions which did not go specifically along with the questionnaire to find out if there were any other autonomy supportive teacher behaviors not mentioned as well as experiences which promoted self-determination (autonomy, competence, or relatedness).

The fourth phase of data collection will be document review. I will examine the documentation relevant to the study. These include Mercer University policies, and all
Data Analysis

Collecting data from numerous sources is a strength in qualitative research. I will begin analyzing the data by reading, rereading, sorting, and organizing the data as I give pseudo-names to participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006). The researcher will analyze the data by looking at the results of the Learning Climate questionnaires and the interview questions while comparing them as to how the results relate to the self-determination theory and teacher autonomy support. A generation of themes will occur as the answers will be color coded. The participants will receive a copy of the interview transcription to be sure this reflects their perspectives accurately.

Subjectivity Statement

The participants involved in this study will not be current or former students of the researcher. When designing the research procedure, the researcher must contemplate the types of “arguments that will lend credibility to the study as well as the kinds of arguments that might be used to attack the findings” (Patton, 1990, p. 180). The researcher’s experiences as a teacher of foster children provides knowledge regarding the needs of foster children in school. These experiences imply a specific set of biases that may possibly influence this study by generating an increased sense of compassion with the participants. Mitigation of bias will take place through validation procedures.

Creswell (2007) reported that there are three types of questions which are models for the researcher to carry out sound life account research. The issues named by Creswell (2007) include ideas such as “individual representation” and "sources of bias" (p.
Creswell (2007) emphasized that the investigator should avoid “making himself or herself simply the voice of the subject” (p. 214). Also, stressed by Creswell (2007) is the importance of the correctness of the narrative when compared to official documents and other person’s accounts (p. 214).

Validity

Guba (1985) identified four criteria for trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher will increase trustworthiness by integrating strategies of qualitative research validity. Glesne (1999) and Creswell (2013) describe multiple procedures for data trustworthiness for qualitative research inquiry. They are triangulation, rich, thick description, and member checking. Triangulation, which includes the use of many data collection methods and data sources will be performed to improve trustworthiness in this study through interviews and a questionnaire. The rich, thick description of the narrative inquiry allows readers to make judgments regarding transferability to other cases because it provides readers with a thorough context of the case. Member checking is essential to credibility in a qualitative research study (Creswell, 2013). Member checking gives participants a chance to examine analyses and interpretations, data, and transcripts for accuracy (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 1999).

Reporting Results

The researcher will provide a thick, rich description of narrative quotes and anecdotes from the interview and focus group transcripts. Included also in the narrative, will be visuals which will include diagrams, charts, and tables. A table of identified themes will be compiled for the future reference of teachers and school leaders.
Summary

This qualitative constructivist study will explore foster children’s perceptions of a classroom environment in how it relates to the self-determination theory. Data will be collected through narrative inquiry utilizing a questionnaire and interviews. The participants will be foster children or former foster children who were in a public-school setting during their time in foster care. They will be selected using purposeful sampling and snowball sampling. The results, together with quotes from the participants, will be assembled in a table for organized understanding. The results will be presented in Chapter 4 of the data collection and the analysis of the data.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I presented the research findings extracted from interview questions based on the Self-Determination questionnaire. This qualitative study intended to interpret the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom as well as how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement. I utilized the constant comparative method to analyze the data in conjunction with the Self-Determination Theory as a lens through this data analysis process.

Constant-Comparative Method

I began analyzing the data by reading and rereading the transcriptions. As I read, I found the main ideas from each of the participant's responses and circled those as codes on the transcriptions. I typed the questions from the questionnaire and included the central ideas/codes from the participant's reactions under each item from the survey, while also separating participant responses by research question one and research question two. I then color coded similar responses to find themes. I began with over 300 codes and then narrowed it down to fifty-eight subthemes for research question one and thirty-five subthemes for research question two. Initially, I thought of placing each issue under the three elements of the self-determination theory, which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness, but due to the fact that the topics are interrelated and cannot be separated because each component affects the other, I decided to use the six-item
version of the Learning Climate Questionnaire to help place those central ideas under each of the six items. In the final analysis, and according to the participant’s responses, I found that two of the six categories on the Learning Climate Questionnaire could also be combined, so then I merged the correlating subthemes into five major, concluding themes for research question one and four major themes for research question two (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1. Themes - Research Question One
According to Patton (2002), when an investigator has a number of cases to juxtapose, an inductive investigation is set into motion by first building each case separately. This process helps the researcher to be attentive and not pigeonhole or categorize the cases. Patton (2002) continued that after carefully recording the independent cases, the researcher can then start searching for common themes and patterns amongst the single cases. Patton (2002) stated that “the qualitative analyst seeks to understand the multiple interrelationships among dimensions that emerge from the data.
without making prior assumptions or specifying hypotheses about the linear or correlative relationships among narrowly defined, operationalized variables” (p. 56).

Therefore, to fully understand the perceptions of each participant, I interviewed, transcribed, and wrote the life story of each participant before moving on to the next participant. As expressed by Patton (2002), this “strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be” (p. 56). This process of inquiry can circulate from inductive methods, which help to decide which questions are most important, to deductively measuring exploratory findings, and then drift back to inductively analyzing data while looking for competing theories and unexpected factors (Patton, 2002).

For this reason, I utilized the Learning Climate Questionnaire in this study, and also employed three open-ended interviews with each participant lasting approximately one-hour for each interview session. Prior to the interview, I asked each participant to complete the Learning Climate Questionnaire based on the Self-Determination Theory which determined their perceptions of teacher autonomy support in the classroom. Patton (2002) wrote, “While the quantitative/experimental approach is largely hypothetical-deductive, and the qualitative/naturalistic approach is largely inductive, a study can include elements of both strategies (p. 57).”

Consequently, after carefully writing up each case separately, I then instituted a cross-case analysis. Patton (2002) asserted that the cross-case analysis is to seek “patterns and themes that cut across individual experiences” (p. 57). Glaser and Strauss
(1967) specified that this helps guarantee that developing groups and patterns are grounded in particular circumstances and settings.

Under these circumstances, I followed the steps of Lincoln & Guba (1985) which outlined that the first guideline of the constant comparative method is to code an occurrence in a group and then juxtapose it with the preceding occurrences in the corresponding as well as differing categories coded in the equivalent group. Therefore, I began coding each interview by extracting the main ideas of the participant’s statements from the interviews in each category of the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Then, I searched for corresponding responses of other participant’s responses in each category of the Learning Climate Questionnaire and grouped their responses into themes.

The second phase explained by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is to “stop coding and write a memo on your ideas.” (p. 342). According to Patton (2002), the primary reason for writing memos is to “uncover the properties of the category” (p. 342). Hence, I wrote memos as I merged groups according to their characteristics. While integrating properties, I searched for how the perceptions of the foster youth and former foster youth look-alike and feel-alike, which is how Patton (2002) explained to execute constant-comparative data analysis.

The third phase, according to Patton (2002), in utilizing the constant-comparative approach is “delimiting the theory” (p. 343). According to Patton (2002), as “delimiting occurs the original list of categories will be reducible in size because of improved articulation and integration” (p. 343). Moreover, the “categories become saturated” (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Because I am looking at the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth through a lens of Self-Determination, I incorporated the Self Determination
Theory as a delimiting factor. Although I placed each code, theme, and memo in a group according to the Learning Climate Questionnaire which determined the student’s perception of teacher autonomy support in the classroom, I remained open to unexpected findings and perceptions of foster youth and former foster youth as to how they perceive teacher autonomy support in the classroom, as well as how they perceive teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement.

The final phase in the constant-comparative method of analyzing data is writing the theory. In this study, writing the theory included presenting the perceptions of foster youth and former foster youth in themes which arose from the data in correlation with the Self-Determination Theory.

Snowball Sampling Method

While utilizing the snowball sampling method and gathering data during fieldwork, it became clear that the foster youth or former foster youth who could provide the highest quality data for this study would be of high school or college age, as well as being either presently or previously in foster care. Therefore, with the help of my daughter, Facebook, a social worker, and a high school counselor. At the time of the interviews, the participants were all enrolled in high school or college: Faith, Hazel, Asher, and Ava.

I located Faith when my daughter announced on Facebook that I was conducting research about foster youth and school. She requested that anyone knowing of any foster youth who may be interested in participating in my study contact her. Faith privately messaged my daughter on Facebook. She sent her phone number so that I could contact
her. Hence, this is how Faith and I met. However, we never actually met face to face; we conversed over the phone and computer via WebEx.

I met Hazel through the social worker in my school district. I sent an email to the social worker inquiring about foster youth age 14 or older who may be interested in participating in my research study. She recommended Hazel and set up a meeting between Hazel and myself. Hazel and I met face to face in public places for several interviews.

I met Asher after contacting a friend with whom I had graduated high school. I learned about Asher by speaking with her daughter in casual conversation. My friend’s daughter told me how her mother and father became foster parents especially for Asher. I sent a text to my friend to find out if he might be interested in participating in my study. She immediately asked Asher if he would like to contribute in my research study and Asher happily agreed. My friend then sent me Asher’s phone number. The interviews with Asher took place over the phone.

I discovered Ava after my principal sent out a mass email to all schools in the county, on my behalf, asking if anyone knew of a foster youth age fourteen or older who may be interested in participating in a research study to help foster children in the classroom. A high school counselor responded to the email and contacted me about interviewing Ava. She spoke with Ava and arranged for us to meet. Ava drove to my school several afternoons after school. The interviews with Ava took place in my classroom.
I must say that each participant in my study was more than happy to assist me in my research investigation. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have met and worked with such amazing youth.

Description of Sample

In an effort to answer the research questions in this study, I questioned all participants to ensure that they (1) were in foster care at some point in their school career, (2) were at least fourteen years of age or older, and (3) for those foster youth or former foster youth eighteen years of age or older, I found out how to contact their legal guardian to have them sign the proper consent form. To protect the identity of participants and sustain confidentiality, the researcher assigned: a pseudonym for each participant’s name (name of choice by the participant), and a number (from 1-4, which correlates with the order in which the interviews transpired). Table 1 below provides the participant’s demographic data. Table 2 provides the participant’s answers and score on the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Following Table 1 are the life stories of each participant.

Table 1.
Participants’ Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Times Changing Homes</th>
<th>Times Changing Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - Faith</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - Hazel</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Asher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - Ava</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>12&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ)

The Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ) is a 15-item survey which utilizes a Likert scale. The LCQ asks students questions involving the extent to which their teacher supports their autonomy. The LCQ has a high internal consistency of 0.93 and 0.94 (Black & Deci, 2000).

Table 2. 
Learning Climate Questionnaire Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Autonomy Support: The Climate Questionnaires</th>
<th>Likert Scale with 1 being Strongly Disagree to 7 being Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likert Scale with 1 being Strongly Disagree to 7 being Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Hazel</th>
<th>Asher</th>
<th>Ava</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my teacher provides me choices and options.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel understood by my teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to be open with my teacher during class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the class.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my teacher accepts me.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher made sure I really understood the goals of the class and what I need to do.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 – continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Faith</th>
<th>Hazel</th>
<th>Asher</th>
<th>Ava</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel very good about the way my teacher talks to me.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel able to share my feelings with my teacher.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean

*Higher average scores represent a higher level of perceived autonomy support.

The Learning Climate Questionnaire measures perceived autonomy support in the classroom. Scoring the 15-item version of the LCQ involves calculating an average for each participant. However, before averaging the items, the score for number 13 must be reversed by subtracting the score for number 13 from 8. Table 2 presents the data for the participants in this study: Faith, Hazel, Asher, and Ava.

Faith scored the lowest in perceived autonomy support of all the foster youth in this investigation. Faith strongly disagreed about feeling understood by her teachers; being able to be open with her teachers; being encouraged to ask questions; her teachers listening to how she would like to do things; her teachers handling people’s emotions very well; and being able to share her feelings with her teachers. The two items that
Faith strongly agreed with on the questionnaire were that her teachers made sure she really understood the goals of the class and what she needed to do, and that her teachers answered her questions fully and carefully. For all other items on the questionnaire, Faith chose neutral.

Hazel scored the highest of all the other foster youth in this study on perceived autonomy support in the classroom. Hazel strongly agreed with every item on the questionnaire.

Asher scored the second from the lowest on perceived autonomy support in the classroom. Asher selected neutral on every item of the questionnaire, except for two items. For the two items that he did not choose neutral on, Asher chose ‘strongly disagree.’ He strongly disagreed that his teacher accepted him, and strongly disagreed that he is able to be open with his teachers during class.

Ava scored the second highest of the foster youth in this investigation on perceived teacher autonomy support in the classroom. Ava selected ‘strongly agree’ with all items on the survey, except two. On a scale from one to seven, Ava chose six for, ‘My teacher listens to how I would like to do things,’ and five for, ‘My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.’

The data from the Learning Climate Questionnaire, paired with the participant’s responses to the interview questions, revealed the perceptions of foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom. I asked each participant why they chose the response they did, to gain an understanding of how they perceived each aspect of teacher autonomy support. Then, I asked each participant how they believed this affects their motivation and achievement. Therefore, the interview questions are grounded on the
Learning Climate Questionnaire which exposed their perceived autonomy support and how it influences their motivation and achievement.

Themes and Sub-themes

Listed below are the themes from the Learning Climate Questionnaire followed by the participant’s responses utilized for analyzing, coding, and categorizing the data as parallels rose. The themes were color coded for each research question and relating subthemes below each theme are numbered.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom?

Theme 1- Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like Connection

Theme 2 - Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement

Theme 3 - Understanding the Goal of the Class

Theme 4 - A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening

Theme 5 - Choices and Options in the Classroom

LCQ1: Teacher provides me choices and options.

1. Subtheme (Resources): Hard to get Online to use programs; Special notebook thing you had to have certain supplies to make it; Didn’t have internet; Didn’t have anything to get on it with (Faith).

2. Subtheme (Assignments): Not a lot of them care as much as the education world; goes; Worksheet (Asher).

3. Subtheme (Assignments): Using music and videos to help; Music is everything to me (Hazel).

4. Subtheme (Time to Learn More): They give you the choice to take a moment for yourself and just kind of figure out what you are doing (Ava).

LCQ2: I feel understood by my instructor.

5. Subtheme (Understanding): I was kind of just shy; Shut down to the world around me (Faith).

6. Subtheme (Understanding): Hard to get through the school day; I’m having a hard time at home; Lot going on in other places (Faith).
7. Subtheme (Understanding): Relax; Take a moment to breathe; They didn’t care; They didn’t want to hear it; I don’t think they could understand; Consequence (Faith).

8. Subtheme (Understanding): Really good relationship; Lot of others did not understand; A relationship with them; Relationship; Relationship; To give you grace (Ava); Simple stuff you mess up on; Everybody deserves; Equal line between the classroom; I was engaged in class discussions; Family connection; Felt understood by my teachers; Understand me.

9. Subtheme (Understanding): I focused on my education a lot more than a lot of students probably because a lot of times people probably think because you are in foster care you’re going to tend to be kind of a bad kid in a way because you don’t have that family connection, but I got that through school because I wasn’t always sure where I would be at in the afternoon if I went home to a foster family I knew that I would come to the same school and that I would come into a classroom and I would be expected to learn. I felt understood by my teachers, not because they knew that I was a foster child because a lot of them didn’t know, but more so just because they were doing their job. They were being a teacher and that’s all I needed at that time was just for them to teach me because at that point that was what I was holding onto was being able to come to a classroom and it being just what I expected it to be. To just be where I could learn and make myself better. Because at the time, you know, when you are in a foster home, you’re not very confident in yourself. And, you know me, I was placed or taken from my biological family’s home when I was four. So, at that time and still, I don’t understand why I was taken from my family to begin with and so, you have that mentality that you don’t know why, and so, you blame yourself a little bit. And, so I didn’t really blame myself too much, but you know, it’s just always there. (Ava).

10. Subtheme (Understanding): She didn’t teach us; Didn’t want to teach us anything; She never ever explained anything; Asked for help she said look at your packet; Explain to them (Faith).

11. Subtheme (Acceptance): Great relationships; Always Help me; If I’m down they still help me; Don’t give up on me (Hazel).

12. Subtheme (Acceptance): So, when you go to school, you have that chance to make yourself better. And, so I took that, and it was something I could immerse myself in without any kind of trepidation. I knew that nothing could go wrong at school. I think that stability was really something that I needed in my life and the teachers understood me in a way as they were just teachers and that was really all I needed (Ava).

LCQ3: I am able to be open with my teacher during class.

13. Subtheme (Comfortable): I’m as open as I want to be with a teacher. So, if there is something that I don’t want to say, I don’t say it. But, if there is something that I do, I feel comfortable saying it. Because, they are teachers, so there isn’t very much they are going to ask you besides what’s the answer to this question. So, yeah, I’m pretty open in class (Ava).
14. Subtheme (Comfortable): Yes, because they don’t...like if it’s important they don’t go around telling others. I feel comfortable talking to my teachers about anything because they don’t go, I mean they keep it to them self and they give me advice on how to handle it (Hazel).

15. Subtheme (Dialogue): I’m quiet in class until something needs to be said. I have learned that you don’t have to be the loudest, sometimes you just have to make an appearance (Ava).

16. Subtheme (Dialogue): I’ve got this Spanish teacher who doesn’t, who goes really fast when she’s teaching and stuff. And, it doesn’t. I don’t ever understand the work that she gives me. When I try to talk to her about it, she will be like, you will have to wait until I can catch you up. After school doesn’t help much. It just doesn’t (Asher).

17. Subtheme (Comfortable): So, that’s when I would become open is when they would ask me, but I would never really completely have felt comfortable being open (Faith).

LCQ4: My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.

18. Subtheme (Confidence, Encouragement): When a teacher is confident in me, they give me challenging work, they tell me I’m smart, that I should do better, that I have it in me to succeed (Faith) They always tell me not to give up, not to get frustrated. They keep calm; Tell me to try to keep calm, and they always help me. They always have confidence in me (Hazel).

19. Subtheme (Encouragement): Although I was not necessarily bad in school teachers brushed me off and seen me as a troubled child. I was not bad, but I had a bad attitude. I was kind of bitter; I was bitter toward people (Faith).

20. Subtheme (Confidence): My teachers are confident enough in me to do that. I have shown that I am a dependable person; I portray myself in a way that other people can be confident in me. When I am caught up on my work, my teachers ask me to do little tasks for them because they are confident that I will get it done; I’ve shown that kind of mentality in the classroom (Ava).

21. Subtheme (Confidence): When my teacher gives me some slack when I forgot to print a paper or something that shows me that they have confidence in me and I excel in their class (Asher).

LCQ5: I feel that my teacher accepts me.

22. Subtheme (Acceptance): I depended on my education when nothing else in my life was dependable or stable. I was accepted in the classroom in the way that no one was stopping me from going in the classroom and no one was pushing me out. That was all of the acceptance I needed right there (Ava).

23. Subtheme (Acceptance): Some teachers cannot accept the fact that some students cannot finish all of their work. Some teachers do not accept the fact that to get out of bed each morning and come to school shows that they are trying (Asher).
24. Subtheme (Respect): I feel that not only do some teachers not accept me, but others; Mr. L will play with him and stuff...will write him up all the time because he disturbs the class but the problem is not him...it’s the teacher sometimes because he will not only start it, he will finish the so-called argument; He was saying...’That’s why you can never pass my class.’ He shouldn’t ever say something like that (Asher).

25. Subtheme (Acceptance): Feeling accepted is like a blanket of hope that someone wants you to succeed. It makes you feel unstoppable, like you have a chance to go to college and have a successful family and a successful life just like anybody else (Asher).

LCQ6: My teacher made sure that I really understood the goals of the course and what I needed to do.

26. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Answering Questions Fully): We were always prepared for our assignments because the teachers took the time to ask the class if we needed any further explanation (Ava).

27. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Encouraging Questions): They play a mind game to see if we were paying attention or not; Most of the kids don’t listen; They know if you’re paying attention; Play a game to see who was focused (Hazel).

28. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Encouraging Questions): Some teachers do, and some teachers do not (make sure I really understand the goals of the class) (Asher).

29. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Not Enough Resources): We were not given enough resources (Faith).

LCQ7: My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.

30. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Encouragement): Yes, I do feel like they encouraged me to ask questions if I didn’t understand because I would always get the comment, you look like your lost back there. And so, that was one thing that I really liked about it because I never really felt like asking questions because I felt like I was dumb. But when they encouraged me to ask them, I felt like it was okay to ask them (Faith).

31. Subtheme Understanding Goal of the Class (Encouragement): All the time. They always want me to ask questions. They will be like... Because I use to not ask questions. That’s what made me not do good. Because I used to be scared to ask questions because people would make fun of me. But then my teacher always said the only question that is stupid is an unknown question. So, that’s what made me start asking questions is because of that comment that they told me. So, I’m like the main one in class that has a lot of questions (Hazel).

32. Subtheme Understanding Goal of the Class (Encouragement): I ask questions like crazy. I don’t think I would be where I am now if I didn’t ask so many questions. Just because I wouldn’t know what I know now. If someone asked
me that many questions I would probably be like ‘You need to pay attention.’ But, even if I am paying attention, sometimes I just need to hear it a second time for it to really click (Ava).

LCQ8: I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.

33. Subtheme (Trustworthiness): I felt like you can’t really trust just any and everybody and I had this fear that my teachers did not care for me, so I never really trusted a lot of them (Faith).
34. Subtheme (Trustworthiness): I have trust in all my teachers (Hazel).
35. Subtheme (Trustworthiness): I think I feel trust in my teachers because I know they are going to do their job to the best of their ability. At least, I hope they are. I have a really good relationship with most of my teachers and they have a lot of lesson plans. They have a lot of stuff to do after school and, so I realize they have a lot of stuff that they have to do. So, I know they are doing their best and they are trying their hardest. And if someone is working that hard to make sure that I learn. What’s not to trust? And it’s important that they are trying that hard because if they were not doing their job just because they didn’t feel like it I wouldn’t be able to succeed like I am (Ava).
36. Subtheme (Confidence): I have a really good relationship with most of my teachers.
37. Subtheme (Encouragement): Yeah, Mrs. I met her when I was going through some things. Especially in the foster care system. And, she helped me out. I mean, when my mother passed away she bought us Christmas (Asher).

LCQ9: My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.

38. Subtheme Understanding Goal of the Class (Discouraging): My teacher refused to help me when I told her in class that I’m not getting this. She refused to help me. I was probably being disrespectful; I felt like she was against me; everything she said to me was with disrespect; now, I probably wouldn’t have done that; everything was just too serious (Faith).
39. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Answering questions Fully and Carefully): Yes, if I don’t get the concept the first time they will come up with a different way to make me understand (Hazel).
40. Subtheme - Understanding Goal of the Class (Answering questions Fully and Carefully): I said asking questions in class is really important because that’s how you learn those small little details that they may have skimmed over; Asking questions you help the teacher realize that they didn’t go over that; It is really fundamental in my education because if I did not have the answers to those questions, and if they were not so welcoming with their elaborations; Making sure that we understood then obviously we wouldn’t understand (Ava).
41. Subtheme Understanding Goal of the Class (Discouraging): Sometimes my teacher would be short or clip answers; Does he think I’m dumb or something;
he would stare at you and later on in the class you’d find out the answer (Ava).

42. Subtheme Understanding Goal of the Class (Discouraging): She would tell me you’re going to have to go back and look in my book; It’s hard for one teacher to go back over a lesson that the class has already went over just for one student; She just didn’t have the time (Asher).

LCQ10: My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.

43. Subtheme (Listening): We came up with a game board; it was fun; the teacher actually took my idea to play that game; they actually take the time to listen to our ideas (Hazel).

44. Subtheme (Listening): She comes in on the first day and hands us this 50-page packet. We had like this argument because when she held it up in the air, we told her we didn’t want to have her there anymore because she didn’t teach us. She just stood in the front of the classroom and handed us packets. She didn’t want to teach us anything. She never explained anything and when we asked for help she just said look at your packet. I think that’s why in 9th-grade, when I went to take my final at the end of the year, when the teacher finally came back, I almost failed it because we weren’t taught anything for 10-weeks (Faith).

45. Subtheme (Comfortable): I think that’s just throughout the class. If my teacher is doing something that I don’t understand, I can raise my hand and be like ‘Can you do this a different way?’ And, they understand me, and they try to do it a different way. I don’t think that a teacher needs to baby you in a way that’s like, let me take a minute and listen to your thoughts because that’s not going to happen. Because high school is not, and it’s definitely not going to happen in the real world… and be like…let me take a minute and listen to how you want to do things. That’s just not how it is. So, you realize that sometimes you just have to make the best of it which isn’t always a bad thing. Because then you not only learn about how you want to do stuff but how other people want to do things as well. And, then you get other people’s opinions and mix them up with yours. You learn new things more than just sticking with your old ways (Ava).

46. Subtheme (Listening): Sometimes whether the teacher listens to how I would like to do things depends on the teacher, the subject, and the atmosphere of the class Asher).

47. Subtheme (Acceptance): I mean there has to be discipline, I understand, there are some bad kids, but I think that, like I said before, getting on a personal level with them. Like how many purple pancakes can fit on the roof and if you don’t answer it you’ll have to go to the principal’s office. I don’t like this new learning stuff, and I don’t even know what I’m trying to say right now, but I think there should be more personal relationships than just having kind of a straight-line thing. I think that’s why some kinds don’t want to succeed because they have this kind of ‘I have to be a certain way.’
LCQ11. My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.

48. Subtheme (Understanding): Sometimes teachers have a hard time understanding a student’s emotions. You cannot expect that. Teenagers are weird. I don’t know what I’m thinking half of the time, how would I expect someone else to know? One day a student asked…and she jumped down his throat. It looked real bad on her. The one time she blows up on someone it’s the wrong one. She’s had some bad day where she would cut short on a lot of things. She will cut me short. She’s a wonderful teacher. She’s my favorite teacher. Then, after class I told her that I was sorry that I didn’t mean to be late. She was just like, ‘I’m sorry, I really didn’t mean it. It’s just not a good day (Ava).

49. Subtheme (Understanding): I have had a teacher in which I had a very close bond because we both didn’t grow up with riches. The teacher tried but the girl pushed her away. As most foster kids would. We barely get something done in that class…there is always some type of scene going on in that class (Asher).

50. Subtheme (Understanding): Some teachers can relate, some can’t; She tried to make it out the door before she started crying but she started crying before she could get out there. The teacher just sat there in dismay and shock. She couldn’t believe what was going on, and she just said, ‘Do we need to have a recess break or something like that?’ The class was quiet the whole day or the rest of that time period. That girl was going through some other things and the fact that she came to school that day...she tried to get her education. The fact that she came to try to get her education says a lot. To say that she’s dumb and don’t know how to do it. The teacher wanted to relate, but she couldn’t relate to that (Asher).

51. Subtheme (Understanding): They can tell when you are having an off day; they can tell when something is bothering me; they can tell that I’m different when I’m down; they don’t be rude or nothing; try everything to make me laugh or smile; all of my teachers love me in their way (Hazel).

52. Subtheme (Understanding): Environment had to be neutral all the time; everybody had to be bold faced (Faith).

LCQ12. I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.

53. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): I think all of our teachers care about us even if just a little bit. When they are like, ‘You need to get your work done.’ They still care about you because it takes a certain kind of person to be a teacher. Because to begin with, you have to really care about someone and whether they are going to succeed in life because that’s your job is helping them to succeed. So, I don’t think I’ve ever had a teacher that just didn’t care (Ava).

54. Subtheme (Respect): Now I’ve had a teacher that was a bit harsh sometimes and I couldn’t stand her, but not to the point to where I was uncomfortable in
her class. She gave some really hard tests and she’s not a very nice person. But, I knew she cared or else she wouldn’t be in front of me teaching (Ava).

55. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere) A teacher’s job is helping students to succeed. I don’t think I’ve ever had a teacher that just didn’t care.

56. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): Some of teachers care about me as a person and some do not. Some of them would bring the work and help me catch up. It really said a lot to me that they cared. Not just as a student but as a human being. They think I have a shot at succeeding in life (Asher).

57. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): They do to an extent, but they don’t care about anything other than the classroom (Faith).

LCQ13. I don’t feel very good about the way that my teacher talks to me.

58. Subtheme (Respect): My teacher got really upset because I gave up and she yelled at me. There are other ways besides yelling at me in front of the class. She wrote me up all the time and I was probably disrespectful because everything she said to me was with disrespect. Everything was just too serious (Faith).

59. Subtheme (Respect): They talk to me with respect; they talk to me kind and they try to make me smile; make a joke out of it and it’s funny (Hazel).

60. Subtheme (Respect): I can’t remember a time when my teacher was super disrespectful. There have been times when they were a little bit short, but that’s everyone. I can be short with people sometimes. A lot of people get offended and I don’t mean to be but sometimes you just have those days (Ava).

61. Subtheme (Respect): Some teachers will actually go to work thinking they are better than others. That’s them trying to put a shield up trying to make themselves feel better. The main problem is they are shutting down the wrong group of kids. It just frustrates me sometimes that they forget where they come from (Asher).

62. Subtheme (Respect): I carried an attitude and I carried it the way I was treated that day or that morning (Asher).

63. Subtheme (Time to Learn More): I just felt like I needed to give up on the work. I would always just try to give up on my work because I didn’t understand it. It was too hard for me (Faith).

LCQ14. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.

64. Subtheme (Assignments): They should look at organizing and learning styles. I don’t think it was ever really considered and it was set in stone (Faith).

65. Subtheme (Assignments): Teachers are pretty good about understanding other points of view because that’s how you learn at first; because to become a teacher is to learn from others. They are very open in that way because every day you learn more and more. You’re not ever going to stop learning and so you might learn something from a 6-year-old and you might learn something
from a 9-year-old; a lot of children see the world in a completely different way than I do; they have so much joy; I am stressed out a lot of the time because of school and college (Ava).

66. Subtheme (Assignments): Some of them actually ask me ‘What’s a better way for you to learn it?’ Well, maybe if we do it this way or that way; I am a visual learner; some of them don’t teach visually; some of the tach verbally and a lot of kids don’t get that (Asher).

67. Subtheme (Assignments): Teachers are pretty good at listening to other people. You have to have the opinion of many to form your own opinion sometimes because that’s how you make the best opinion. That’s how you become a person who is willing to do the best for others because you are willing to listen to others (Ava).

68. Subtheme (Assignments): They listen to our ideas; we work together to come up with something together, as a team (Hazel).

LCQ15. I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.

69. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): Hearing the opinions and what people think is just wonderful for me because I would rather someone tell me the truth. Just helps me learn even more (Ava).

70. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): I have trust in all of my teachers. I can talk to them about pretty much anything (Hazel).

71. Subtheme (Understanding): Sometimes I don’t really want to share my feelings because I think that’s really weird. You don’t want your teacher to know everything (Ava).

72. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): You put something out there like I’m having a bad day and you come to a teacher hoping they can relate to me or something like that, and sometimes they say, ‘I don’t have time, come again another time.’ That adds to your day and makes it worse. I carried an attitude and I carried it the way I was treated that day or that morning (Asher).

73. Subtheme (Understanding): I just feel like they wouldn’t understand; It wasn’t the place to talk about my emotions (Faith).

74. Subtheme (Family-Like Atmosphere): I go to both of them a lot for support and a lot of my decisions; I was able to speak to them and just like now and in previous years I always go to them; They are kind of like yin and yang; Mr. C is a sarcastic and funny guy; He’ll be like kind of harsh sometimes when he thinks that you really need to get something done; Mrs. B is really sweet and caring; She’s like super-caring, and like loving, so I can go to her when I’m having a bad day; I go to Mr. C because he’s real blunt; Get their opinions and then form my opinion from all three of theirs, plus what I thought to begin with really helps me out; I kind of need that background from someone who has done everything in their life; He’s like so sarcastic; it kills me; He will pick on me sometimes; I listen to myself more than anyone else; Love to get advice from Mr. C and Mrs. B and my mom (Ava).
RQ2: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement?

Theme 1 - Confidence

Theme 2 - Motivation

Theme 3 - Inspiration

Theme 4 - Emotional State

LCQ1. Teacher provides me choices and options.

1. Subtheme (Emotional State – Happy/Unhappy): When they use music and videos that deal with that subject. It makes it more easier to help me work because I like music. Music is everything to me. And when they play music that deals with that subject or lesson it's really cool. I can hear, and I know that song but it’s in the learning section (session). And it’s really cool and it helps me (Hazel).

2. Subtheme (Emotional State – Happy/Unhappy): Personally, I’m kind of creative in a lot of things and that’s something that is very important to me is to be able to put how I’ve portrayed something into my work. So, instead of what someone thinks I should be doing (Ava).

3. Subtheme (Motivation - Listening to and Conversing with Students): Yes, it does (affect my desire to want to learn) because when they give me choices they are willing to look at what I can do from my viewpoint (Asher).

LCQ2. I feel understood by my instructor.

4. Subtheme - Confidence - Support (Financial or Emotional): When I did not have the money, they paid for me to go. Kind of gave me the confidence. It was all in my mind that I can’t (Faith).

5. Subtheme - Emotional State – Comfortable/Uncomfortable: Relationships help me to feel comfortable to ask the questions I need to. When a teacher sits down to talk to a student one-on-one and bond with that student sometimes that will touch these children to want to be successful and give them confidence that they can do it (Asher).

6. Subtheme - Emotional State – Comfortable/Uncomfortable: I think that if I didn’t have a good relationship with my teacher I wouldn’t feel comfortable to ask the questions that I need to ask on a daily basis (Ava).

7. Subtheme - Motivation - Support/ Encouragement: When we had competitions and stuff for it, I was always the one that he chose. That motivated me in his class to do better (Faith).

8. Subtheme - Motivation - Support/ Encouragement: Yes, they make my motivation very strong because they tell me not to give up. Because it gets
frustrating. Because I get frustrated a lot. I have a hard time learning. But when they tell me not to give up that I’m doing great it makes me really want to work harder. Because hearing that makes me feel good (Hazel).

9. Subtheme - Confidence - Trust (High Expectations): If I don’t understand something, they make me confident in myself to know that if I make a B on something I know that I still have that chance to make an A on the next thing. Even if it’s just a simple quiz or a daily worksheet. They are that kind of backbone support and you don’t really notice it until you’re thinking back and you’re like wow, the teachers really did help me (Ava).

10. Subtheme - Confidence – Trust (High Expectations): They do a lot more than you think with like lesson plans. Tests are like hard; they are there to help (Ava).


12. Subtheme – Inspiration – (Diploma): Want nothing but the best for you then that motivates people to get that diploma for themselves (Asher).

13. Subtheme – Inspiration – (Diploma): Sometimes that will touch some of these children to want a diploma (Asher).


LCQ3. I am able to be open with my teacher during class:

15. Subtheme - Emotional State – Comfortable/Uncomfortable: Being able to be open in the classroom really ensures that I am as comfortable as possible and if I am comfortable I can learn without worrying about anything but the task at hand. It allows me to feel safe in the classroom so that I keep coming back (Ava).

16. Subtheme – Motivation – (Care/Do not care about learning): You are just going to start being mean; just not focus on the point; he was doing his work then when he got him to start talking he just kept talking and the teacher told him you just need to be quiet; he just came to school and he didn’t listen to the teacher; he literally sat there and would sleep; I don’t care; Went back to sleep; he got wrote up again (Asher).

17. Subtheme – Emotional State – (Happy/Unhappy): Trying to pass the class you can’t have a negative vibe; you have to have everything positive; can’t have problems with the teacher (Asher).

18. Subtheme – Emotional State - (Happy/Unhappy): If he would have pulled him to the side and talked to him one-on-one; God only knows what was going on at his household; He could have helped him out (Asher).

19. Subtheme – Emotional State – (Feel Good or Bad About Self): He was wrong for starting the conversation; telling the kid to shut up (Asher).

20. Subtheme - Motivation – (Care/Do Not Care About Learning): It kind of made me a little less motivated that they didn’t understand (Faith).

LCQ4. My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.
21. Subtheme – Confidence (Trust/High Expectations): My track coach; I didn’t have the money; I didn’t think I could really come up with the knowledge to be in the history club or be capable of doing anything they did. Put me in his club and paid for me to go (Faith).

22. Subtheme – Motivation (Support/Encouragement): I was always the one he chose; Motivated me in his class to do better (Faith).

23. Subtheme – Confidence (Trust/High Expectations): Gave me confidence that I can do it; It’s all in my mind that I can’t (Faith).

24. Subtheme – Motivation (Support/Encouragement): They make my motivation very strong; they tell me not to give up; they tell me I’m doing great (Hazel).


27. Subtheme – Emotional State (Self-Esteem): If my teacher was always mean mugging me and not respecting me then I wouldn’t feel good about myself (Ava).

28. Subtheme – Emotional State (Self-Esteem): He wouldn’t look me in the eye and that was extremely rude; it made me feel bad about myself (Ava).

29. Subtheme – Emotional State (Happy/Unhappy): Don’t listen to the reason; teachers respecting you even if it’s just the teacher-student respect (Ava).

30. Subtheme - Confidence (Showing they are Capable): Hey, you can do something, and, I’m proud of you; you don’t have to be overly proud; show them that you’re not all the time expecting them to fail; I don’t think anyone has ever expected me to fail; teacher is confident in you; even if a teacher doesn’t really expect much at all but they just want you to try. Then, that’s good enough for me; a teacher is confident in you and act like a teacher should because they expect you to do the best you can (Ava).

31. Subtheme - Motivation – (Acceptance/Respect): They don’t discriminate towards you; Even if you are the quiet kid in the back of the classroom that looks like they aren’t doing their work; Treat them with respect; If you are a bad kid and you talk all the time; Wouldn’t expect the teacher to think ‘Oh, she’s going to fail; They put them in this class and there’s a lot of bad students or what people think are bad students; They just assume the worst from him; They will be like he is just a crazy kid; Literally with disdain, be like I don’t want him in my class because he is kind of rowdy; You’ve got to use that rowdiness and make it into something to motivate him to succeed; When Isaiah is talking in class and talking about football, Mr. C doesn’t shut him down right away; Like he does that kind of motivation thing and that is something that is really important for a student; We don’t know what their home life is like at all; You don’t need to know to be a good teacher (Ava).

32. Subtheme – Confidence (Trust/High Expectations) - Be confident in them and let them show their skills (Asher).

33. Subtheme – Inspiration (Working harder): Isaiah started to study more; May not have the highest GPA but he is doing better; He is going around to colleges and he is looking into things; He’s still rowdy in class; He isn’t the
perfect student; Mr. C is still motivating; Teachers are kind of like I don’t want him in my class; He’s a rowdy student (Ava).

34. Subtheme – Motivation (Acceptance/Respect) - He’s still rowdy in class; He isn’t the perfect student; Mr. C is still motivating; Teachers are kind of like I don’t want him in my class; He’s a rowdy student (Ava).

35. Subtheme – Inspiration (Diploma): You know, it’s the small things that count. It doesn’t take much to inspire people to want an education (Asher).

36. Subtheme – Motivation (Care about learning) - If they think you are there and are going to be a support system (Asher).

37. Subtheme – Confidence (Showing they are capable) - I kind of lost confidence in whether I was going to pass the class because I missed so much school; I know that she was doing it for me; She would pull me to the side and say, ‘Do you understand it?’ (Asher).

LCQ5. I feel that my teacher accepts me.

38. Emotional State – (Comfortable) - Everyone needs support (Faith).

39. Confidence – (Trust/High Expectations) – I think the more support you have the more confident you will be (Faith).

40. Motivation – (Acceptance/Respect) – Having my teacher accept me for who I am motivates me to come to class. If you feel accepted, you will more than likely come back (Ava).

41. Emotional State – (Happy/Unhappy) – I don’t let it get me down; a lot of people change; it’s different (Asher).

42. Motivation – (Acceptance/Respect) - A lot of new teachers so some of them have different styles that I’m not familiar with; I’m used to older teachers, like more mature teachers; Younger teachers don’t really do much; They rely on technology a lot (Asher).

LCQ6. My teacher made sure that I really understood the goals of the course and what I needed to do.

43. Motivation – (Making Information Clear and Answering Questions): Making it more clear would motivate us more (Faith).

44. Confidence (Showing they are Capable): Fully comprehending something is important to me because if I understand a subject completely I can achieve whatever I need to without becoming frustrated (Ava).

45. Motivation – (Listening to and Conversing with Students): Having a teacher who is happy to help and willing to fill in any gaps I may have on a topic motivates me to continue to ask questions and continue to learn (Ava).

46. Inspiration (Successful): Some kids don’t focus on school ...because there’s other things going on in their life. That takes more...matters more than school does. That’s why you get a lot of kids that drop out (Asher).

LCQ7. My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.
47. Subtheme Confidence (Comfortable): …because in math I need someone that I can ask questions because if I can’t then I’m not going to know it because even if I listen as much as I can there is sometimes when I just need that assurance (Ava).

48. Subtheme Confidence (Comfortable): Being able to ask questions is a bond that students have with teachers. It’s a healthy encouragement that allows students to put away their troubles and focus on their work (Asher).

49. Subtheme – Emotional State (Self-Esteem/Feel good/bad about self) Encouraging others in a healthy manner then they are going to feel great about themselves.

50. Subtheme Motivation (Support/Encouragement): Well, it’s a bond that teachers have with their students. Sometimes it’s a good bond and sometimes it’s a bad bond. But, either way it goes, if he goes in there and his encouragement is a healthy one, then it’s going to set the tone for the rest of the class period (Asher).

51. Subtheme - Motivation (Care/Do Not Care About Learning) - They are going to be able to put aside all of their troubles….and they are going to focus on him and what he’s talking about because he gave them a good feeling when they were having a bad one (Asher).

LCQ8. I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.

52. Subtheme Motivation (Care/Do not care about learning): And trust to me is important because if you don’t trust anyone you’re not going to get that relationship that we have with our teachers to try to learn (Ava).

53. Inspiration – (Make Me Work Harder): I wouldn’t know if it was a lie or it was the truth (Ava).

54. Subtheme Emotional State (Happy/Unhappy): A strong hold and not only does that make you feel better, it helps the teacher understand your pain (Asher).

55. Motivation – (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - They can spot that teen and sometimes that teen will open up and sometimes they won’t. It’s because either they trust you or they don’t. Or, they don’t know you and they want to trust you, but they just don’t want to throw themselves out there. When teens allow teachers to hear what’s going on...to hear what’s happening at home that’s what we call foundation of trust. And, when that happens, the teen builds on that trust (Asher).

56. Subtheme Emotional State (Happy/Unhappy): - And, when that happens, the teen builds on that trust. You have a strong foundation. A strong hold and not only does that make you feel better, it helps the teacher understand your pain. And, it not only does that, but it also lets you use him or her as a vent system (Asher).

57. Inspiration (Successful): And trust to me is important because if you don’t trust anyone you’re not going to get that relationship that we have with our teachers to try to learn because if I didn’t trust them I wouldn’t try to learn what they are teaching because I wouldn’t know if it was a lie or it was the truth (Ava).
LCQ9: My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.

58. Subtheme (Happy/Unhappy): It kind of agitates me a little bit, but then I would sit down with myself and I would write about all of the questions that I have…Asher).
59. Emotional State - (Self-Esteem - Feel Good/Bad About Self) - I would see what I could take off my schedule to give more time for school, for work, home, anything like that…what can I do? (Asher).
60. Motivation - (Making Information Clear and Answering Questions) - Asking questions is really important; that’s how you learn those small little details (Ava).
61. Motivation - (Making Information Clear and Answering Questions) - When I’m working towards a goal, I understand better that helps me to have my questions answered fully (Faith).

LCQ10. My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.

62. Subtheme – Motivation - (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - Teachers do a really good job at listening to how I need things to be done in order to understand things. I think they do a good job in keeping it balanced, but I still learn their way which is the correct way on some things. It can’t always be about me sometimes it has to be about what is going to better me in the future (Ava).
63. Subtheme – Motivation - (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - Most teachers do allow us that opportunity but some of them do not. Not everyone is on the same page education wise. Some people take time, some people can catch it like that; Some people are visual learners, some people catch it by just hearing it; There are a whole lot of different capabilities out there (Asher).
64. Subtheme – Inspiration (Diploma/Success): It has to be about what is going to be better in the future (Ava).
65. Subtheme – Motivation - (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - Yes, because everyone has a different learning (Faith).

LCQ11. My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.

66. Subtheme – Motivation (Support/Encouragement) Knowing that my teacher is there as a constant support is good enough for me. I don’t need them to understand my every emotion (Ava).
67. Subtheme – Motivation (Acceptance /Respect) - As long as my teacher respects me, that will ensure I continue to enjoy class (Ava).
68. Subtheme – Emotional State (Happy/Unhappy) - As long as my teacher respects me, that will ensure I continue to enjoy class (Ava)
69. Subtheme - Motivation (Care/Do Not Care About Learning) – Yes (I think my teacher handling people’s emotions very well affects my motivation and
achievement), because everyone has something else going on besides school (Faith).
70. Subtheme – Motivation (Acceptance /Respect) - Some teachers grow up like that and they don’t know how it is…(Asher).
71. Subtheme – Inspiration (Diploma): They know it gets harder every time you progress (Asher).

LCQ12. I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.
72. Subtheme – Inspiration (Success): Knowing that my teacher is there for me and is teaching me to the best of their ability shows me that they are and knowing that they care encourages me to want to continue to learn and do great things (Ava).
73. Subtheme – Inspiration (Make Me Work Harder): Getting my diploma was something that I was not going to lose sight of because I knew that without it I couldn’t really do anything (Faith).
74. Subtheme - Motivation (Care/Do Not Care About Learning) - Some foster parents or parent, mothers or dads or foster care systems or group homes they don’t care. It depends on what’s going on (Asher).
75. Subtheme – Motivation (Listening to and Conversing) - It depends on the outcome of the problems that has been occurring because some foster parents or parent, mothers or dads or foster care systems or group homes they don’t care. It depends on what’s going on. It depends on what’s going on with the child. They wouldn’t, or they shouldn’t have any problem with it, but some kids abuse the teacher as like a way to send messages to get away and get out of group homes. A group home got shut down because a kid told his teacher about what was going on and the teacher reported it (Asher).

LCQ13. I don’t feel very good about the way that my teacher talks to me.
76. Emotional State - (Self-Esteem - Feel Good/Bad About Self) - When I do not feel good about the way my teacher talks to me it honestly puts me in a bad mood and I don’t want to do anything else (Faith).
77. Subtheme - Motivation (Support and Encouragement) - … and I won’t want to do anything else (Faith).

LCQ14. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.
78. Subtheme - Motivation (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - Knowing that my teacher at least tries to see things from my perspective is very beneficial because it allows me to be comfortable in stating how I see things in hopes my teacher will guide me down the path of success without being forceful with only their way of doing things (Ava).
79. Subtheme - Emotional State (Comfortable): When teachers make us more comfortable it makes it easier for us to retain certain things (Faith).
80. Subtheme – Motivation (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - If you show them a way that you can do it. That might spark an idea in their minds that might go by your plan or add to it or they just flip it up and teach it some kind of familiar way and they you are more regulated to learn (Asher).

81. Subtheme – Inspiration (Work harder): She is teaching something that she is not comfortable with, but she is doing it to help you. A lot of teachers want to go by their plan…. doing that same method for years (Asher).

LCQ15. I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.

82. Subtheme - Motivation (Care/Do Not Care About Learning): I think they would understand more about the situation and I wouldn’t have to worry about it getting in the way of academics (Faith).

83. Subtheme - Motivation (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - Being able to tell my teachers how I feel and knowing that they will be there and help me through whatever it is (Ava).

84. Subtheme - Inspiration (Success): Support me really helps me to be confident in myself and motivates me to succeed (Ava).

85. Subtheme – Confidence (Trust – High Expectations) - It’s all about the trust.

86. Subtheme – Confidence (Trust - High Expectations) - That should make the teacher more reliable. He also trusted him or her and should make the teacher inspired and put some more into their teaching to get through to that person (Asher).

87. Subtheme – Inspiration (Work Harder): Make the student more motivated to take heed and get the knowledge that they need, and to study and to pass (Asher).

88. Subtheme - Emotional State (Happy/Unhappy) - Emotions play a big part in life. They tell us if someone is happy or upset or frustrated or anything like agitated (Asher).

89. Subtheme - Motivation (Listening to and Conversing with Students) - You automatically snap on them. They are wanting to just be helpful. What’s going on and can we help you? I want some help. If he accepts it, that should make him feel better that he got something off of his chest (Asher).

Faith’s Life Story

Introduction. Faith is a white, eighteen-year-old female. She was placed her foster care immediately after the death of her father. Faith’s mother was sent to prison for drug trafficking. Faith is the next to the youngest of eleven children. At the time of the interview, she was on break from school but enrolled in a community college and had been taking core classes. She reported that her plan was to become a domestic violence
counselor. Faith stated that she enjoys public speaking. During her lifetime, Faith lived in approximately ten group homes, in addition to other relatively short stays in treatment centers for trauma. She was kicked in the face by an older girl in one of the group homes which resulted in facial surgery. She stayed in three family respite homes for extremely short amounts of time. She recalled that one of the visits in a respite home was for three days. Faith attended school in some of the group homes, but at other times she went to public school.

Runaway. In 2007, someone called 911 to report a little girl with a Hello Kitty book bag walking down the northbound ramp. The police quickly picked the little girl up in their car and drove her to the police station. After questioning her, they discovered that she was running away from her foster home. She stated that the reason she ran away was that her foster parents killed the Billy goat in the backyard and served him for dinner. She was traumatized by this event and begged the police not to take her back to that home. Although she did not go back, this event was the beginning of Faith’s relinquished stay in a long line of group foster homes. The way the care system works is if you run away from a placement, you must be placed in watchful oversight for self-protection. Watchful oversight is a type of group foster home in which the children live under the highest level of restrictions.

Death of Father. Granted, just a short time earlier, this little, nine-year-old girl lost her father to stage four colon cancer, hence her entire family and home. Before his untimely death, Faith’s dad worked for a large hospital as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Her dad was her closest companion, primary caregiver, as well as the most important person in her life. When Faith’s dad learned about his cancer, Faith was
just seven-years-old. Her mother struggled with addiction, so it was her dad that kept the family together and took care of them. Faith disclosed that her mom was never present or in the picture. She described her mother as being drug-hungry during the time of her father’s illness; hence, there were various men in and out of their house who were not very friendly to her or her siblings. Immediately following her dad’s death, Faith recalled being led out the hospital room by a stranger and taken directly into foster care. She revealed feeling extremely angry and described being taken into foster care as being jerked up and separated from her siblings and family forever. This stream of traumatic events occurred when she was just a third-grader. Faith remembered being sent to school soon after and teased.

Growing Up. At nine years old, Faith entered her first group home which was a watchful oversight facility. To clarify, there are various facilities which offer levels of care or treatment for foster children. The levels of treatment lie on a spectrum ranging from a base site facility, which is a group home with the least amount of restrictions, to a watchful oversight facility, which is a location with the highest level of restrictions. Faith explained that when a child is in a watchful oversight facility, they are not even allowed to keep lotion in their bedroom. To be placed in this type of home at such a young age was overwhelming for Faith.

Moreover, Faith described the watchful oversight group home as being more like a psychiatric ward for kids than a real home. She stayed there from the time she was nine years old until the age of twelve. Faith remained in this group home for three-year long years. Even though she was treated excellently by all the staff and believed that the staff there loved her, she confessed that she felt scared most of the time. Even though most of
the kids were mean, she thought that a couple of the kids there really enjoyed being around her. With so many older girls there, it was difficult to feel safe because there was always something happening.

At twelve years old, Faith arrived at her second group home placement which was a base facility. After living under these circumstances for so long, Faith was happy to go to a base facility finally. She stayed there until she was about 14 years old and then moved to another base home. But, even though it was a base, it was still a very restricted environment. She said that the children did not get to do much. They stared at the walls most of the time. She said that they did go out some, but that they only walked around in the park each time they went out.

On a more positive note, one thing that Faith is thankful for is that in the group home they placed a high priority on academics. She said that they always had to have a book and if the children did not read part of their book each day, they did not get to do other things. According to Faith, she loved the fact that the staff at the group home liked to see them ‘do their education.’

Beginning with the death of her father, Faith was in and out of more than ten group homes in her lifetime, not to mention smaller stays in trauma treatment centers for her trauma. She experienced only three family environments in her lifetime. Those were the one that she ran away from with the Hello Kitty book bag on her back, and two other respite homes, which are short-term stays in a family’s home. She stayed with one of those this family’s for just three days. She remembered them as extremely kind people; in fact, she wanted to stay. But, she expressed that she never had the chance to have a family environment. Faith was never adopted by a family.
School. Faith has bittersweet memories of school in her early years. However, she is especially grateful for two teachers. The two teachers of whom she specifically mentioned with fondness, were her kindergarten teacher and her first-grade teacher. Faith expressed how they took good care of her. She keeps in touch with her first-grade teacher. This teacher, Miss Lake, once revealed to Faith that she still feels guilty for not reporting her gut feeling that something was not quite right with Faith’s home life, even though she did not know for sure, or to what extent. Faith said that Miss Lake told her that she remembered giving Faith her time and space when she needed it to blow off steam. Faith remembered having problems, as a child, expressing her emotions. She never wanted anyone to see her upset. After her daddy became sick, and although she was not in first-grade anymore, Miss Lake still took her home from school sometimes and helped her with her homework. She will never forget that on their way home each time they would stop by Dairy Queen to get a large fry and a Dr. Pepper. Faith said that it was as if both Miss Lake and her kindergarten teacher understood and did things to try and help her. Although, Faith could not recall a day or event from kindergarten in detail, she had the same feeling about her kindergarten teacher. Faith said that both teachers supported her. She conveyed how Miss Lake, especially, always went the extra mile to let her know that she was loved. Faith feels as though it was a blessing to have these two teachers step in like this when that was not in their job description and revealed that she is immensely grateful for both.

In contrast, when Faith entered third grade, she recalled a daily reading class in which she did not feel loved. She described an event that occurred when the class was reading a book. Faith says that she cannot recall the name of the book because of how
much she hated this one day. It began when the teacher instructed her students to come to school dressed up in old western attire and old-timey clothes to celebrate the book they were reading; however, Faith did not have anything to wear. Faith recollected throwing something together at her house and doing the best that she could with what she had. But, after arriving at school that day, this teacher let her have it! Faith recalled how her teacher was distraught because she did not wear the right thing. She told Faith that she could have done better. But, she still made her take a picture with the entire class, and even though Faith was crying in the photograph, the teacher put the picture in the newspaper anyway! This experience was awful for Faith. There were, in fact, many similar struggles throughout her school career. Oh, how she longed to be a part of everything the class did but usually did not have the supplies. Each time the class did something, and she did not have the resources, it made her feel less than a person.

Comparatively, Faith disclosed that some of her worst days in school were field days because a lot of the kids’ parents came; she struggled with being by herself on field day. She said that this might seem stupid to some people, but “it hurt her little heart that no one came to support her.” Picture days were also difficult for her because it seemed that everyone dressed up so cute and looked nice, but foster homes did not help foster children get ready for picture day. Faith never enjoyed that aspect of going to school. She also recalled that her high school graduation day was especially painful.

When asked who became the most important person in her life after her dad’s death, Faith could not answer. In fourth, fifth, or sixth grade, there was no one specific, most important person in her life or a best friend. She did not begin forming relationships again until she was in eighth grade. Eighth grade is when she met her best
friend, Jacie Lynn. Jacie Lynn and her mom took Faith under their wings. Jacie Lynn’s mom even paid for Faith to go on a school trip to Washington, D.C. Nevertheless, Faith maintained that monetary or material things do not mean anything. Most important to Faith was that Jacie Lynn and her mother were there for her emotionally; they were people whom she could trust.

Equally significant to Faith was meeting ‘Coach’ her eighth-grade year. ‘Coach’ was the track coach, but he also sponsored the history club, and she loved history! She said that he knew more about her than most teachers. She recalled not having the money to join the history club, and she did not think that she had the knowledge to be in the history club either. In fact, she did not believe she could do anything they did. But, she said, he put her in his club anyway, and paid for her to go! When they had competitions and events, she announced that he always chose her to compete. His confidence in her motivated her to do well in his class, as well as to do better all the way around. She stated that this gave her the belief that she could do it and made her believe that it was all in her mind that she could not.

Nevertheless, Faith still classified herself as an introvert. She wasn’t always engaged in class discussions and considered herself shy. Shutting the world down around her was her way of coping. The school administration tried to help her by arranging for her to go to a specific spot in the school when she was overwhelmed or upset, to relax and take a moment to breathe when she needed it. However, she did not do this very often because her teachers became irritated with her when she was late for class. When her teachers questioned her, she did not want to talk or explain to them that she was having a hard time at home. She felt as if they did not care or want to hear it because “it
had nothing to do with her school life.” She didn’t believe they could understand how hard it was to get through the school day because of all that was going on in other places of her life.

For instance, when she was in ninth-grade, she was raped, which resulted in pregnancy; hence, she gave birth to a son that lived for only a few hours due to an extra chromosome. Faith’s brother died in a car accident in the April before this interview. When asked about her grandparents, Faith replied that they had the chance to be involved in her life but neglected the opportunity. The fact that her grandparents took her twin sister in after the death of her father was hurtful to Faith because they did not take her. However, she believed that it was because her twin sister suffered from an autoimmune disease. Her twin died when they were fifteen; they were fraternal twins. Faith’s sister was twelve minutes younger than Faith. Faith explained that her mother did drugs when she was pregnant with them, and she thought that therefore her sister had this disease. Faith exposed that she has tachycardia and epilepsy herself. Faith is one of eleven siblings, most of whom are older and scattered around the United States. She has one younger sister who was adopted and lives with a family. Faith reached out to her older siblings for love and support, but she alleged they wanted nothing to do with her. Faith said that they were all busy with their own lives. The losses and disappointments experienced by Faith are many for such a young age. Although Faith has been through a lot in her life, she is confident, optimistic, and has plans and the potential for a bright future.

Even though Faith described 'school' as a struggle, she also thought of it as an escape. She grew more serious about academics during her high school years when her
friendships began to form stronger. She always had things to look forward to, such as graduation day because it was getting closer. Cracking down on her work became her focus. She reminisced not having time for any of the emotional stuff in her life. Faith recalled, “School was mostly an escape, but I struggled through it. I don’t know if this makes sense.”

Eighteen Years of Age. At the age of eighteen, Faith received an apartment within the care system. She referred to this as an independent living program. Faith explained that when a foster child turns eighteen, and as long as they are in school half-time or working, the care system pays for an ‘apartment’ for the foster child until they finish school or reach twenty-one years of age. Faith said that she has now reached the age to where she is all that she has, and if she doesn't do things for herself and love herself, then no one else will; however, this drives her.

Despite the worries that Faith encountered while growing up, she persevered and is now in college. Her first major was nursing, but she had a change of heart. After completing anatomy and physiology, psychology, and a few other core classes, she decided that she wants to go into social work; she wants to become a domestic violence counselor.

Faith is triumphant. The respect she receives is well-deserved! She is involved in public speaking and recently spoke at an awards ceremony, as well as several other speaking engagements. Also, Faith writes her speeches. Conversing with Faith revealed that she is a phenomenal speaker! Other people apparently see her potential as well. One example is the coach of a college football team, who sponsors her while she is in college.
In fact, she has many people, such as mentors, teachers, friends, her church family, etc. who love, support, and cheer her on!

What Happens Next? Faith contacted me several times after the last interview. Her situation now is the epitome of what most all foster youth experience. After turning eighteen years old and being moved into an independent living facility and away from her school, mentors, and all that is familiar, her mental and physical health began declining. Although she had a life coach and caseworker who kept in contact, she stated, ‘I have just lost hope’ and ‘I’m emotionally tired. I’ve cried for days.’ She reported to me that the foster care system considers her ‘medically fragile,’ and ‘they are still struggling with placement.’ Because of her health situation, she said that they would send her to a medically fragile facility. I encouraged Faith to be tough, hang in there, and get back into school.

Recently, the state released her mother from prison. Her mother visited Faith frequently while she was in the hospital, but Faith does not trust her. She is deathly afraid that the care system will place her with her mother. The point of it all is that when a foster youth turns eighteen years of age and is not in school or working a certain amount of time, the care system releases them. However, if the foster youth is working or going to college the required length of time, the care system will support them until they reach twenty-one years of age. Faith reached that point in her life; however, she does not have the ‘normal’ amount of support as most of the youth her age, nor did she grow up with the constant help of a mother, father, and extended family. Being without a family must take a toll on a person.

Hazel’s Life Story
Introduction. Hazel is a white, nineteen-year-old female. She was enrolled in special education classes as a junior in high school until she had to move out of her home and into a women’s shelter during Christmas break of her eleventh-grade year. Leaving her home that day (only days after this interview), made the fifteenth time Hazel moved houses in her lifetime, including the ten times she changed foster homes as an infant. Hazel reported never living with her biological mother; DFACS took her away from her mother only a few days after she was born. Hazel is the oldest of thirteen children; although, her biological mother does not have custody of any of them. Moreover, she does not know her biological father, mother, or siblings. Hazel reported living with her aunt, who is her mother's sister since third grade. However, DFACS removed her from her aunt’s house and placed her in a foster home during her sixth, seventh, and eighth grade years. Finally, she moved back in with her aunt (mom’s sister) after eighth grade and had been there since until the day before school let out for Christmas holidays. At that time, DFACS removed Hazel from her aunt’s (mom’s sister) home again and transferred to WINGS, which is a women’s shelter. The positive attitude and fortitude displayed by Hazel under these circumstances was remarkable.

Moving from Place to Place. Hazel stated that the reason she left her aunt's home was due to her stepfather's unwanted sexual advances. She reported to the social worker that he gave her money for things. Hazel's aunt (mom’s sister) found out when her son saw the advances taking place and told her. Hazel’s aunt (mom’s sister) worked nights so that she could be available during school hours for Hazel. Hazel reported being afraid to tell anyone. Upon finding out, the high school counselor and social worker immediately reported the occurrence to Hazel’s caseworker; the caseworker instantly removed Hazel
from the home. Hazel stated feeling relief because she did not have to go back there, but she did not want her aunt to be mad at her. The caseworker retrieved Hazel's personal items from her aunt's home then transported Hazel to 'Grandma's' house.

Moreover, Hazel divulged that this was the second time she was removed from her aunt’s (mom’s sister) home due to sexual violation. The first time her older cousin, who was her aunt’s son, bothered her. Nevertheless, she was excited to spend the night with her Grandma. Even though, Hazel explained, that Grandma is not her Grandma, but rather her former foster mother. Hazel just lovingly called her Grandma.

As it wound up, after spending one night with Grandma, Hazel learned that she was too old to remain in foster care. Because she is nineteen years old, her caseworker carried her to WINGS for a pre-approved two-week stay. Hazel found herself alone in a strange place over her Christmas break.

From the time she was born until she was ten months old, Hazel changed homes often. Hazel explained that she was taken from her birth mother, in California, only days after she was born because her birth mother could not even take care of herself much less a baby. Hazel conveyed that she is the oldest of thirteen children and her mom does not have custody of any of her siblings. She learned this because she heard stories from her great-uncle and her mom’s sister about how she was in ten different foster homes by the time she reached ten months old.

Finally, at ten months old, and after being transferred among ten different foster homes, Hazel’s great-uncle acquired custody of her. However, she could not recall how her uncle got custody of her, only that she was in his custody from the time she was ten months all the way up to seven. Furthermore, Hazel could not remember very much prior
to her going to live with her uncle. It was her great uncle, great aunt, and her aunt (mom’s sister) who told her that she was ten different foster homes by the age of ten months old. They also told her about how she could not sit up at ten months of age. They said that she could not sit up when her great uncle got her because she was always laying in her crib. Hazel said, “It was like my body didn’t know how to sit up. I was always laying down.” Furthermore, Hazel divulged that when she was a baby she was not fed properly. She said that she was always fed bottles, and that she was not fed baby food when she was supposed to eat baby food. Nonetheless, Hazel had many fond memories of living with her great uncle.

Notably, Hazel remembered her uncle taking her to Disney World when she was six years old. Hazel said, “Boy, I remember that. I remember that we used to go on a lot of trips. Every summer we would go out into the states.” Hazel smiled as she stated that she was spoiled by her great uncle because she was the only girl. She reported feeling sad when she learned of her uncle’s death. At the time that she lived with her great uncle and great aunt, they had two sons of their own living with them. Their sons are a few years older than Hazel. Hazel reported that she still keeps up with her ‘brothers’ on Facebook. However, she said that she is not close to her great aunt (great uncle’s wife) and her great aunt does not reach out to her. She remembered feeling closer to her great uncle than her great aunt when she lived with them.

Despite all the wonderful memories of living with her uncle, Hazel moved in with her aunt (mom’s sister) at the age of seven. She did not know how or why her aunt (mom’s sister), acquired custody of her. Hazel referred to her aunt (mom’s sister) as mom. Hazel said, “I don’t really know how she got me. I don’t really know the whole
story. I had a messed-up life. I had a messed-up life.” She disclosed that she thinks it’s because, “I had issues. I couldn’t really … I had temper tantrums a lot. Like, if I didn’t get my way I threw a fit.” She stated that her great uncle and great aunt did not know how to handle that because they always wanted to make her happy. Hazel said that when her aunt (mom’s sister) took her in they moved to Nashville, Tennessee.

Comparatively, Hazel also enjoyed living in Tennessee with her aunt (mom’s sister). She said that the only bad part about Nashville was the snow. She hated when it snowed, and they could not go to school. The ice on the roads and the two-hour delay for school was difficult. Even though she enjoyed playing in the snow, she did not like having to make up the lost time in school during the summer. Next, she moved with her aunt’s (mom’s sister) family to Georgia. She reported that people tell her a lot that she talks differently. She stated that when they do, I tell them it is because I am originally from California. She announced, “I like the way I talk!”

Even though Hazel remembered good times while living with her aunt (mom’s sister), there were also bad times. For example, DFACS removed Hazel from her aunt’s (mom’s sister) home when she was in sixth-grade. She said that is was for the “same thing that is pretty much happening now.” But, she continued, “At that time, it was my older brother (mom’s sister’s son).” Well, she said, “He feels like a real brother to me but he’s not my real brother. He is actually my cousin.” Hazel added, “But this time is was my stepdad that hurt me.”

Middle School and High School. Correspondingly, Hazel reflected that, “My sixth-grade year was my most troubled year of my life.” She revealed that in sixth-grade she was placed in ISS (In-school suspension) and detention. Hazel announced that, “me
and my teachers really didn’t see eye to eye. I don’t know. They weren’t bad teachers. We didn’t click. We didn’t see eye to eye. Like … I’m not saying they didn’t like me.” Hazel described how her seventh-grade year was better and her eighth-grade year was even better. She announced that she is doing even better in high school. She said that now she does not ever get into trouble.

However, going back farther, Hazel proclaimed that, “when I was in kindergarten I was a bad child. I got sent out of class so many times. I got sent to the office.” Hazel retold an incident where she got in a teacher’s rolling chair, and would not get out of the teacher’s class, so they rolled her to the office. She said that she was bad in elementary school. She reported that when she was younger she did not ‘click’ with teachers. However, as she got older she began ‘clicking’ with teachers. She said that she even clicks with the resource officer at school.

By and large, Hazel described the school she is in now as different, but different in a good way. Hazel asserted that the people at her present school treat her better than any other school in the past. She explained that at her previous schools, “no one treated me…. I mean no one knew what was going on. No one knew what I was going through.” Hazel expressed that she loves her present school. This is Hazel’s philosophy:

If you are going to disrespect me first, I’m going to disrespect you back.’ Because, just because I’m a student, doesn’t mean that you have every right to be rude to me. If I’m not rude to you, then don’t be rude to me. It’s like...I follow the golden rule. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Because I mean, if you are going to treat me with disrespect then I’m going to treat you with disrespect. You treat me nice, then I’m going to treat you nice. My dad is
like…'Oh, they are adults.' Okay, so what if they are adults. They didn’t have no right being rude to me. If I have to be respectful to them, they have, like every right to be respectful to me. I don’t care if your adults or a child.

Hazel declared how much she enjoyed being in high school. She reported that her teachers could tell when something was wrong with her because she does not act the same. However, rather than being rude to her, they talk to her after class. Hazel pointed out that disrespect is not how you build relationships. Teachers should talk students one-on-one if they have a problem with a student, or the teachers could ask the student to stay in after class, so they can talk about it.

Moreover, Hazel referred to the people in her school as her family. She commented, “People are like, why do you want to go to school? And I’m like, well school is really fun to me because I learn something new. I don’t like getting up in the morning. That’s the only part I don’t like is getting up out of my warm bed. But, going to school makes me really happy. I like seeing the people that love me and all of that. I like seeing my friends.” Hazel disclosed that there are three people that are particularly special to her at her school. Those people are the high school counselor, one specific teacher, and the resource officer. She stated that she likes seeing them because they are her family.

Similarly, Hazel maintained that she has great relationships with all her teachers. She stated that they help her all the time, and “they don’t ever stop.” Hazel reported that, “if I don’t learn it one way, they try to teach me another way.” She acknowledged, “It is great to have teachers that don’t give up on me.”
On the other hand, Hazel mentioned her worries about being twenty-years old when she graduates high school. Regarding her motivation, she replied, “They make my motivation very strong because they tell me not to give up when it gets frustrating.” Hazel stated that she gets frustrated a lot because she has a hard time learning. However, she said that when her teachers tell her not to give up and that she is doing great, it makes her want to work harder.

Likewise, the school counselor reported that relationships play a major role in Hazel’s life. She stated that she thrives from having healthy relationships with people at the school, both adults and peers. Regarding relationships at school, the counselor continued by saying that relationships at school are important for all students, but more so for those who have unstable home lives. The counselor communicated how students spend a majority of their day, while awake, at school. She emphasized how important the interaction with the adults at school who can motivate, encourage, love, and support those with unstable homes and how they can make a world of difference with students. The counselor recounted that Hazel frequently tells her that she feels that the only people who care about her are individuals at the school. She said to think of how the little interaction she has with her throughout her day makes such a difference in her life, lets her know what the other relationships in her life must be like to her.

Bearing in mind Hazel’s future, the high school counselor conveyed that her plan is to continue to encourage Hazel throughout her schooling. The counselor stated that more than her education even playing a part into her future, the relationships she has established at the school will make a huge difference. Hazel has not had much positive support from family and those who typically encourage students. In fact, for Hazel, those
The counselor stated that to be able to have people in her life to love her the way everyone deserves to be loved, is what is going to be the key to her success after high school. The counselor stated her goal is to help Hazel find a life plan for herself.

All things considered, Hazel said that she never disrespects her teachers. She added that if she is having an off day they understand. Hazel said that just because she is having a bad day that does not mean that my teachers should be disrespected. She added, that having a hard life has just made her stronger and she is not going to give up. She said that she has days that she breaks down, but other than that, “like all my friends say ... I’m strong.”

What Happens Next? Hazel contacted me, via texting, a couple of times after our last meeting. She reported that she lives at WINGS (Women in Need of God’s Shelter); furthermore, Hazel unenthusiastically informed me that she dropped out of high school. However, Hazel plans to obtain her GED. Knowing how much she loved school, I am sure this was a sad and painful decision for Hazel. About quitting school, Hazel described how her ‘siblings’ still attended her school, and they caused a lot of ‘drama’ for her at school about what happened in her family. She seemed sad but okay with everything. I know that Hazel must make some decisions about working or furthering her education quickly, due to the rules within the care system about the number of hours a foster youth must spend either working or attending school to receive support. Hazel has no other support besides the school social worker, school counselor, her caseworker, DFACS, WINGS, etc. Hence, she has no family. Also, Hazel disclosed in an interview that she has a hard time learning.
Asher’s Life Story

Introduction. Asher is an African-American, seventeen-year-old, male. He is a junior at a public high school. Asher currently lives with his biological grandmother who is his mother's mother. From the age of twelve to seventeen, Asher lived in approximately ten different places, which included foster homes, family placements, group homes, and a hotel, until finally moving back in with his Grandma. At the time of this interview, Asher had been again living with his Grandma for a little more than a month. He is the oldest of five siblings. Asher reported spending time in foster care as an infant but has no memories of it. He stated that he has lived with his biological grandma off and on for most of his life. At the age of ten or eleven, Asher went to live with his mom. Soon after, she lost the battle to breast cancer. Asher endured a long, five-year misadventure with the foster care system, and his mother's death marked the epic beginning.

Asher goes to live with his mom full time. Up until the age of ten or eleven, Asher and his siblings lived back and forth between his mother and his grandma. However, Asher mostly lived with his Grandma. One summer, his mom wanted him to come to live with her for the summer. Although he did not want to, he went anyway. His siblings were already living with his mom at the time. Even though he planned to return to Grandma’s house before school began, it did not go as planned. Somehow, he said, he and his siblings ended up staying with his mom until school began. Asher said that is when things started getting out of hand. He announced that his mother and stepfather got into arguments all the time. Asher said that they would always fight and then someone
would end up calling the cops. It got so severe that one day his family got evicted and they all had to go their separate ways.

Mother Passes Away (Sixth-Grade). After their eviction, his mom started calling different people to see if they could keep her children for a bit. Asher went back to live with his Grandma. His Grandma also kept his younger siblings for a short time; even though, they were supposed to go somewhere else. In time, they all went back to live with their mom. Asher said that they were 'one big happy family' again; until his mom passed away.

Sister's Sexual Abuse Uncovered/Changed Schools (Seventh Grade Year). At this instant, Asher and his siblings went to live with Asher's stepfather’s mother; whom they called Grandma C. However, while residing with Grandma C., some disturbing facts began to uncover. These events surfaced while his stepfather was in jail for some crimes he committed. Asher's sister painfully revealed that her stepfather had been raping her throughout the time that his mom was married to him, which was about five and a half years.

Immediately, Grandma C. and Asher's step-aunts (his stepdad's sisters) called the police because his sister was so upset that she was crying. As soon as Asher's stepdad returned from jail, the cops arrested him, but he repeatedly denied the accusation. In the beginning, Grandma C. (stepdad's mom) seemed to be on their side, but then she turned on them and testified against his sister. Asher was in seventh grade when he learned about what had happened to his sister. Therefore, the summer after seventh grade, Asher, and his siblings went into foster care.
During his eighth-grade year of school, Asher changed family placements twice. After school let out for the summer, Grandma C. called DFACS (Department of Family and Children's Services). DFACS picked Asher and his siblings up and took them to the DFACS office. Asher vividly remembered waiting in the DFACS office lobby for a long time for someone to pick him up. He said that his siblings were the first ones to go. Then the only children left were he and his brother, the two oldest siblings. He said that his aunt came to get his brother and they asked her if she could take Asher because 'no one is wanting Asher.' So, that's when Asher started living with his Aunt K., who is his brother's dad's sister. Asher explained that all of his siblings have different dads. He lived with Aunt K. for a portion of his eighth-grade year.

Eventually, Asher moved in with his uncle. His 'uncle' was his grandmother's cousin. He lived there for approximately four months. He left after he began exhibiting behavior problems. Asher revealed that it was because of being moved from place to place. He started shutting people out. He developed trust issues because he thought the only reason anyone wanted him was for the money that the government would give them. Asher believed no one wanted him. His uncle forced him to change schools. When he shut down and would not talk to his uncle about his feelings, his uncle felt that he should leave.

After leaving his uncle's house, Asher went back to his Grandma's house. While living with his grandma, he got into some trouble while hanging out with the wrong crowd at the new school. He recalled how he hated moving around and felt that he did not have anybody.
Asher experienced a new beginning his ninth-grade year. As soon as summer came, Asher moved in with a new family. The Mrs. met Asher when, one Christmas, she and her family wanted to buy Christmas presents for a family in need. The school counselor told her that about children who recently lost their mother to breast cancer. So, she and her family bought bicycles and Bibles for all of them. The Mrs. reminisced about the day she and her family took the bicycles and Bibles to the children. She said that 'one by one, they got off their bikes and peeled off into the hallway to read their Bibles.' She said that it was shocking. She added that there were no toys at their house, not even a tree, but their favorite gift was their own Bible. However, the Mrs. later found out that the lady who they were living with sold all of their bikes and kept the money.

Eventually, Asher recalled, he found the Mrs. at school. Then one day after practice Asher said that he walked outside, and his foster parent was not there to pick him up, but the Mrs. was! She took him home that day, and soon after, she and her husband decided to open their home to him. Asher referred to them as 'mom and dad.' He stated that he and his mom had a very close bond because neither of them grew up with riches.

For the most part, Asher's stay with the Mrs. and her family went exceptionally well. He stated that the Mrs. and Mr. were not only his foster parents, they had become an integral part of his life. However, Asher said that something came up at school and he did not deal with it appropriately. The Mrs. and Mr. tried everything, but he would not talk. They did not know what to do. Then, due to the correspondence between the Mrs. and DFACS, DFACS found out about the school incident, and Asher was taken from their home and placed in a group home the summer after ninth grade.
Group Homes. Consequently, Asher moved away and into his first group home setting. However, Asher said that when he arrived, he just sat there for about two weeks. After the move, he did not begin school right away, but he did eventually. Asher reported going into survival mode while in the group home. He said that there was a lot of underhanded things going on there. Even though they allowed him to talk to the Mrs. and Mr. twice a week, they would not let them visit; and he lost contact with his Grandma. Asher attended school in this new town his entire tenth-grade year.

Meanwhile, the group home was on the verge of shutting down. That group home closed its doors at the end of Asher's tenth-grade year. So, he headed to a new group home for eleventh-grade.

The summer following tenth grade Asher arrived in a new town to begin life in his second group home. He attended an eleventh-grade in a public high school which was a new environment. However, he was only there for approximately three months because they did not offer ROTC and they were not equipped to manage his ILP.

So, Asher transferred to a new city and moved into his third group home setting. But, after arriving at his third new group home, he waited two long weeks for the school to begin, but it never did. After talking to a friend on the phone, Asher decided to leave. Asher reported that he walked away, and his friend picked him up; they went to Florida for about six weeks, but he returned home. The friend was someone he lived with at a previous group home. Asher said that the friend owed him a favor. All things considered, during the time he lived at the third group home, he was in constant contact with his Grandma, as well as his ‘mom and dad.’
Finally, Asher moved back in with his Grandma. He is in eleventh grade and doing well. He is looking into his options for college. As of now, Asher wants to major in criminal justice. He said that he wants to find a career where he can help people. It seems that Asher has a good support system in his life. The Mr. and Mrs. continue to back Asher, and Asher still calls them mom and dad!

After the Interviews. The difference in Asher’s story and Faith and Hazel’s story is that Asher has his Grandma, who he feels has been a constant support in his life. He also has the Mr. and Mrs. Nearing the end of the last phone interview with Asher, his ‘dad,’ the Mr., pulled into his Grandma’s driveway to pick him up to take him to soccer practice. Later, I spoke with her and she sadly divulged that Asher did not make the high school soccer team.

A few weeks after that, my high school friend, Asher’s ‘mom,’ sent me a selfie of her and Asher. They were sitting at a table in a local restaurant, and they invited me to stop by if I was in the area. Unluckily, I was not, so I declined the invitation, but it made me happy that he has her and her husband on his side. It is obvious that she and her husband include him as if he were their own child. With them and his Grandma to support him, it could make all the difference in Asher’s life.

Ava’s Life Story

Introduction. Ava is a white, seventeen-year-old, female. She is in enrolled in Gifted Honors classes, and she is the valedictorian of her 2018 graduating high school class. Before going into foster care, Ava lived with her biological dad, mom, and three of her four siblings. Ava’s oldest brother is twenty years older than she is, and he had already moved out of her parent’s home by the time Ava was born. At the time of her
birth, her father worked in a local factory, and her mom was a stay-at-home mom. Ava became a foster child at the age of four. She first went to live in a foster home, then a family placement and finally she was reunited with her mother at the age of twelve. She is currently seventeen years old and lives with her mother.

Ava recollected her early years before foster care when she was living in a trailer on a large farm with little crops of vegetables and lots of animals like dogs, cats, and a cow. She said that her dad built her bedroom and her parent's bedroom onto their trailer after she was born. She remembered her bedroom as pink and beautiful. She said that she had a canopy over her bed and lots of dolls. Ava reminisced about how her bedroom looked like a forest because she wanted to be a princess. However, she was afraid to sleep alone, so she never slept in her beautiful bed, but with her parents instead. Her older brother and sisters also had their own bedrooms. Ava's mom spent a lot of quality time with her.

Because they had a swimming pool, she recalled learning to swim at a very young age. Her mother often allowed her to swim in the mornings. She remembered her mother saying that she was crazy for swimming because the water was too cold, but Ava said that it was not cold to her because she loved to swim so much. She has fond memories of taking family vacations and everything being nice. Ava believed it was so beautiful because her mom made it that way. Her mom later told her that she protected her children from a lot by not letting them see things. If her dad was ever aggressive, she did not see it.

However, Ava did recall one incident which she does not like to talk about because it was so disturbing to her. That was when her boy cat whom she named Princess
scratched her. Her dad got so mad at the cat that he took a baseball bat and went into another room with the cat and beat the cat with the baseball bat. The cat lived but lost an eye due to the beating. There was blood after he left out of the room. It was a horrible experience for Ava, and she does not talk about it very much. Ava does not remember that much about her dad. She believed that is because he worked a lot. However, she fondly recalled that her mom was always there for her.

For example, her mom would sing to her and read to her. She was very determined to help Ava learn. Because of the breathing difficulties Ava had at birth when her lungs collapsed doctors thought that she might have brain damage due to the time that her brain went without oxygen. She was hospitalized and had multiple surgeries due to the condition of her lungs. She recalled oxygen tents, shots, scans, and etcetera. Ava's mom stayed awake all night many times to make sure she did not quit breathing. Although Ava did not attend pre-k and was placed in special needs classes until she was in first grade, she triumphantly tested into the gifted program in third grade.

Going into Foster Care. Ava vividly remembered the day the social workers came to take her into foster care. She described it as a tragic day, and recalled yelling over and over, 'I'm too young for my parents to die!' She knew that something happened, but she did not know what it was. She was scared and did not like being taken from her mom. On that day, she believed that her parents must have known about her dad's impending arrest for the sexual abuse of her sister. They sent the kids to her aunt and uncle's house so that they would not have to experience his arrest. The social workers picked the children up from her aunt and uncle's house. Ava was confused and did not know why she had to leave her home. Ava said the crazy thing is, 'It (foster home) was literally just right down
the road, and my mom had no idea.' She said that they do not tell parents where they take the kids because of the chance that the parents may try to take the kids. Even Ava had no idea how close she was to her original home because she was so young and did not have a clear concept of time, direction, or distance. Not to mention, she could not see out the window of the car because she was small.

As a result, Ava found herself, in her first foster placement, and at a random person's house whom she did not know. During her stay with this foster family, Ava's oldest sister became the most important person in her life in the absence of her mother. Her older sister (not the oldest who was staying with her) who experienced the abuse went to a group home for girls, and her older brother went to a group home for boys. In the foster home, there was Ava, her oldest sister and two other foster kids who already lived there. Those kids were older and closer to her brother and sister's ages. Ava was thankful to have her sister there with her.

Granted, her new foster parents were not the most caring people. They were also an entirely different religion from Ava. They were Pentecostal, and Ava's family was Southern Baptist. Her foster parents did not allow the girls to wear pants, and if they did, they looked at them with disdain. Her new foster parents limited the children to three meals a day because they said they were too big. Ava said that she had always been a little chunky. She did not recall any blatant physical abuse, but her foster parents talked down to them about their weight. Also, her new parents did not celebrate any holidays. Moreover, they did not go trick-or-treating on Halloween, but they got candy. However, their foster parents took the candy from them. Furthermore, at Christmas, their foster parents told them that Santa Claus was not real. For Christmas, they did not give them
any presents, but the children did receive gifts from CASA. Ava recalled how hateful the foster parents were toward her and her sister.

For instance, Ava remembered asking her foster mom what the tomato sauce was on a pizza, and her foster mom told her that it was blood. Ava recalled thinking about how they were so bound at being Christians, yet they were so mean. Ava vividly recollected an incident where she left her glasses at daycare when her foster mom picked her up. Ava took her glasses off at daycare while playing so that she would not break them and forgot to put them back on. Her foster mom was so mad at Ava for leaving her glasses that she made Ava sit at the table for an hour, and Ava was only five or six years old. This time-out was extremely long for Ava. She could not understand why her foster mom did not notice that she did not have her glasses on when she picked her up from daycare. This punishment was especially hurtful to her. Ava described her foster parents as not emotionally caring. She did not expect hugs from them. Ava missed her mom terribly.

For this reason, the weekly visits with her mom which lasted an hour each time were the highlight of her life. Ava said that she could not imagine what her mom was experiencing. Having four children and then suddenly they are gone must have been devastating for her. Ava loved the visits with her mom. She said that her mom tried to make their visits pleasant and that her mom put on a brave face for them and did not cry. Ava looked forward to the visits with her mom. Ava’s relationship with her mom remained as constant as possible throughout their separation.

In contrast, the emotional disconnection between the children and their foster parents was because the foster children did not stay at home all that much. They either
went to the after-school program at school or daycare. During the summer and on holidays they always attended daycare. Later in life, Ava learned that these people passed away, and she was like, 'Wow, they passed away.' She was sorry that they did, but she did not know them that well, and they were not very nice.

Ava recalled that as bad as she did not like living with her foster parents, she would rather have stayed with them than to go to her next placement. She said at least she could get away from her foster parents by going to the after-school program and daycare, and while her foster parents were at work, they could play outside and go on adventures. However, Ava had no control over where she went to live next.

Suddenly, Ava and her oldest sister are moved in to live with her aunt and uncle, which was her second foster placement. Her aunt and uncle are her dad's brother and his wife. One would think that living with family would be the next best thing to living at home. However, from Ava's perspective, she was locked in a house that she could not get away from and living with a family that did not love her as a family should. Her uncle and aunt treated her and her sister more like animals than people because they yelled at them so much. Ava believed that the reason her aunt and uncle took them in was for the supplement. Ava stated that to this day she would not eat Ramen noodles or frozen pizza because it was the only thing they had to eat when she lived there. Another issue was the favoritism shown to her aunt and uncle's children.

For example, her aunt loved ice cream, so she would buy ice cream and put it in a refrigerator that she kept in her closet and not allow them to have any. Then, when her grandson came along, she would buy a tub of ice cream especially for him and put it away so that they could not have any. Ava’s aunt told them that it was for him and that
they were not allowed to have any. Ava lived with them for seven years. Her aunt and uncle would go grocery shopping and shop for food that they wanted which was super unhealthy.

For this reason, the children especially were overweight. Eating unhealthy foods, experiencing the verbal abuse of being yelled at regularly, and having nothing to do besides eating and watching TV played a huge role in their weight. Ava recalled not being allowed to leave the house. She said that she could count on one hand the number of times she left that house to go to a store while living with her aunt and uncle for seven years. Ava stated that Savannah, her niece, lives there now and she weighs about 300 pounds. Ava believes that it is emotional eating that causes Savannah to overeat. She said that she used to do the same thing when she lived there. Not only were we rarely allowed to go shopping they also could not participate in extracurricular activities at school or any sports. Ava’s aunt and uncle told them that they did not have any gas to take them or pick them up.

In fact, Ava's aunt and uncle explicitly told the children not to sell anything for the school. However, as a fundraiser, the administration at their school instructed the teachers to give students raffle tickets to sell for one dollar. While riding the bus on the way home that afternoon, Ava asked the other children on the bus if they wanted to buy a raffle ticket, and she sold one. Ava's aunt and uncle found out, and she got into trouble. They yelled at her. She was so upset and uncomfortable that she confided in the counselor the next day. Trying to help, the counselor called Ava's uncle and aunt. That night when she got home from school, she got yelled at more because they said she should not have told anyone.
In addition, there were also other neglectful practices of Ava's aunt and uncle. They did not teach their children to brush their teeth. Ava did not know she was supposed to brush her teeth until she moved back in with her mom at the age of twelve. She was not allowed to shave while living with her aunt and uncle. She could not show any emotions, so if she was sad, she cried herself to sleep. Ava was afraid to touch the phone because they were not allowed to pick up the phone. At first, her aunt and uncle let her talk to her mom on the phone, but then they began limiting the calls to extremely short amounts of time. Furthermore, using copy paper was entirely out of the question. Moreover, they bought them only one outfit to start school with each year, and it was supposed to last the entire year. Along with the constant yelling, there was also the constant threat of a spanking. Although there was no physical abuse, there was a constant fear of the retaliation of yelling.

Similarly, for Christmas Ava's mom bought her and her sister Christmas presents. However, her uncle and aunt got angry because her mother did not buy as much for her cousin that lived with them, so Ava or her sister were not allowed to enjoy them. Ava specifically remembered a tie-dye shirt set that her mom bought her one year. She said that she used it once, placed it on top of a cabinet and then it was gone. She believed they threw it away. Ava said that they were never physically abusive in the way that they ever hit her, but they were terrible people.

To demonstrate, Ava recalled her aunt and uncle going to church every Sunday, and even though they cussed like sailors, they did not cuss at church. Instead, they were soft-spoken, but as soon as they returned home, they went right back to cussing and yelling at them. Ava could not tell anyone about them in the community because the
people in the community knew them as the people they were in church and town. Ava recounted the times in the beginning when social workers would visit. She said that her aunt would be sweet and put on her happy face; it would look great. However, they were not nice. Ava recalled never being comfortable in her own skin.

As a result, Ava recalled wishing many times that there was such a thing as a time machine so that she could go back and find out what happened and change it. She loved her mom and knew that her mom was the sweetest person and that she did not deserve any of this. It was hurtful to Ava to know that her mom had five children who were taken away from her because of what her biological father did. Ava said that looking back now it feels like a distant dream. She recalled the day she went back to live with her mom.

Going Home. Finally, Ava reunited with her mom. She remembered the day vividly. Her uncle came to her and said that the court decided that they could go and live with their mom if they wanted, or they could stay there with them. Ava recalled carefully answering so that he would not know how much she wanted to leave. She did not want to get into trouble by seeming so happy, but inside Ava was ecstatic!

Consequently, Ava stated that her mom is not the wealthiest. She sold everything she had to pay for lawyers. Her aunt and uncle had a double-wide trailer and a lot of land and beautiful cars. When she started living with her mom, her mom was living in a single-wide trailer because she is a single parent and works at a fast food restaurant. Living on fast food restaurant wages is tough. Although Ava's mom had a single-wide trailer at the time, they now live in a small house. Ava reported that the single-wide trailer was not the prettiest thing, and the car was older than most, but she was content. Ava announced, “Oh, my God, I was so happy to move in with my mom.” She said that
on their first night together they went out to eat, and then they pulled out the couch bed from their old house and that is where they slept. She slept with her mom that night because she was 'just so happy to be finally back with her.' She did not care how the house looked or how old the car was. She was just so happy to be away from her aunt and uncle and with her mom. Ava said that her mom did everything that she could to make sure that she was comfortable. Ava reported that she had never eaten a toaster strudel until she went back to live with her mom. Even though Ava said that she would not eat those now because they are very unhealthy, then, Ava said, ‘These are really amazing!’ Ava is very health conscious now; she eats clean and does yoga. She revealed that she now has a morning routine and reported that mornings are her favorite time of the day.

Also, about the copy paper thing, when she moved in with her mom, she could use copy paper anytime she wanted. She did not have to ask, and she did not have to be afraid to use it. Ava said that her mom could not afford crazy stuff, but she made sure that Ava had everything that a kid could want. Mainly, she felt safe more than anything. Ava said that there had not been one time since she has been back at home with her mother when she feels uncomfortable saying what’s on her mind.

School. Ava said that she has been at the same school her entire life, and she feels fortunate that she never had to change schools. While living in foster care, there is not the same family connection as living with a biological family. Ava divulged that she did not have really have that mom and dad sense while living with her parents. Being moved from home to home was hard for Ava, but she reported that the one thing that was constant for her was her school. Ava focused on her education more than anything else.
She believes that this helped her to prosper and become the person she is now. With all of the uncertainties that go along with being in foster care, the one thing Ava knew for sure was that she would go to the same school and the same classroom every day and be expected to learn.

Particularly crucial to Ava in elementary school was the school librarian. She remembered helping in the library and talking to the librarian about things. The librarian gave Ava a journal once so that she could write her thoughts down. This small act of kindness meant so much to Ava. The librarian always made a point to talk to Ava and to be sure she had someone with whom she could communicate. Ava reported that all of her teachers have been good over the years and that she could not think of a time when that she did not feel comfortable coming to school.

Ava is currently in high school; she said that she loves going to school and getting that family vibe. It is welcoming to feel that family vibe where it is like we are all here together to either dread it or enjoy it. Ava reported how she likes the realness of a teacher. She named three teachers as being most integral in her high school education. She said that they are the most real people. They do not treat her as a student and not so much as a friend but as a colleague almost. Ava announced that these teachers respect her not so much as she has to say yes ma’am or yes sir to them and they will be kind to her. Instead, with a kind of respect where they are on the same level. They do not treat Ava like they know more than she knows but rather like they know more than she knows in their own way. Ava informed enjoying the whole experience of school. She asserted that when she comes to school, it is a haven for her. The teachers that Ava reported as helping her the most in high school are her construction, health care, and literature
teacher. Two of those teachers are the advisors for the non-profit organization in which Ava is involved in at school.

Comparatively, Ava said that the non-profit organization mentioned above played a crucial role in improving her self-confidence and communication skills. She reported that her construction teacher encouraged her to join this organization in ninth grade and it has impacted her life significantly. Ava stated that she has not had the most comfortable life while going from foster care to family care. She added that she is not rich, but she does not mind that she does not have the most money in the world because it shows her the perspective of the average person. Ava said that from here the only place she can go is up.

As an illustration, Ava went from beginning school as a special needs learner, to regular education classes, to Gifted and Honors classes, to graduating at the top of her class. She persevered during the break up of her family, foster care, family care, and poverty, to becoming triumphant as the valedictorian of her senior graduating class. Ava will attend a prestigious university and plans to become an international corporate attorney. Additionally, Ava has many other talents such as painting, singing, and public speaking.

When asked what message Ava has for teachers of foster children, Ava responded that that foster children just need for someone to treat them like he or she were any other child. They do not want anyone feeling sorry for them. Teach them as if they are any other student; do not be too nice or too harsh but be confident in their abilities.

Consequently, when asked about a message that Ava has for foster children, Ava responded that she wants them to know that no matter what they are going through to
believe that it will get better. For them to do their best to make it out of the situation that they are in, make the best of their situation, and to 'bloom where they are planted.' We may not be in the best place, but that does not mean that we cannot make something of ourselves.

What Happens Next? Meeting and conversing with Ava revealed why she is the valedictorian of her graduating high school class. She is a remarkable young woman. She is quick-minded and well-spoken. As I said earlier, she drove to my school for the interviews. I asked her if she would like to come and speak to my Advanced Content/Gifted class, and she enthusiastically agreed. Her speech to my class was magnificent. She began her speech by writing the word ‘IMPOSSIBLE’ on the board. Later, she conveyed to the class that ‘IMPOSSIBLE’ actually reads ‘I’M POSSIBLE.’ Her speech was impressive and motivating to my students.

Ava’s situation is also different from Faith and Hazel’s circumstances because she has her mother as a support system. Ava still intends to start college at a prestigious university after graduation. With her grades, she earned scholarships as well as being eligible for grants. Ava wants to become an international corporate attorney. She recently landed a part-time job with a global company located in the town of the university she plans to attend. Ava hopes that she can work there while in college and then possibly work for the international corporate attorney within that company. Ava revealed that her mother might move to school with her, and she sounded excited.

Emergent Themes

The following central research questions guided this study:
RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support in the classroom affects their motivation and achievement?

As a result of this study’s data analysis, each research question yielded five categories for each research question. Five themes involving the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom, and five themes concerning how the foster youth perceive teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement.

Patton (2002) stated that when converging, judging, and deciding what data go together, one should look for “recurring regularities” which reveal patterns that can be organized into themes (p. 465). The groups must then be assessed for “internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity” (Patton, 2002, p. 465). Therefore, I worked back and forth as I classified the data which meaningfully belonged together into themes, while also searching for items which overlap and cannot be assigned to the basic category (Patton, 2002, p. 465). To clarify, included below are each research question, followed by each theme and then the supporting evidence showing how I integrated each theme to embrace the “whole picture” (Patton, 2002, p. 465).

Themes

First, the themes are grouped under each research question. Therefore, following research question one is the five themes associated with research question one, and afterward is research question two and the four themes linked to research question two.
Research Question One

RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom? The following five themes are based on research question one:

Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like Connection
Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement
Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class
Theme 4: A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening
Theme 5: Choices and Options in the Classroom

The five themes that arose from research question one centered on the questions from the Learning Climate Questionnaire. After completing the LCQ, the youth in this study answered a question such as, ‘Why did you choose your response to this particular question/statement?’ This question allowed the youth to explain their perception of specific autonomy supportive behaviors or actions listed on the LCQ. Their responses to these questions are what the foster youth in this study perceive to be autonomy supportive behaviors.

Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like Connection

The first theme centered on the importance of foster youth to feel 'acceptance, respect, understanding, and a family-like connection' in the classroom (see Table 3). This theme emerged from participant’s responses to interview questions two, five, eleven, twelve, thirteen, and fifteen, which were based on the Learning Climate Questionnaire (see appendix c for the Learning Climate Questionnaire). The statements from the Learning Climate Questionnaire are listed below:
LCQ2: I feel understood by my instructor.
LCQ5: I feel that my instructor accepts me.
LCQ11: My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.
LCQ12: I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.
LCQ13: I don’t feel very good about the way my teacher talks to me.
LCQ15: I feel able to share my feelings with my teacher.

Participant responses to these questions are similar because all of their answers deal not only with the fact that foster youth must feel accepted in the classroom to thrive but also how they believe teachers can create a learning environment in which foster youth feel received, welcome, understood, and respected.

Table 3.  
Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, Family-Like Atmosphere

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>11, 12, 22, 23, 25, 47</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>24, 54, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 71, 73</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Like Atmosphere</td>
<td>53, 55, 56, 57, 69, 70, 72, 74</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,  
I would go in and I was so introverted that I really didn’t want to talk or explain to them that I’m having a hard time at home. They didn’t care. They didn’t want to hear it. That has nothing to do with your school life you know.

Hazel stated,  
I have panic attacks. I get nervous and I shut down. And when I do, I know have teachers that I can talk to because I know when my anxiety starts to come up because my heart starts pounding really, really fast. It’s hard for me to breathe. I shake. I can’t be still. I have to walk across...and I have teachers that I tell that I have anxiety. They tell me to take deep breaths. They help me.

Asher stated,
They can’t accept the fact that some students can’t finish all of their work. They don’t accept the fact that for them to get out of bed and come to school ought to give you a reason why they are trying. So, even then school was an important place to me, even though I was a little bit more reserved. Even though I was quiet, I could still come here, and I knew that I would learn something. And so, I was accepted in a way that no one was stopping me from coming into the classroom, and no one was pushing me out of the classroom. They welcomed you in.

Theme 1 Summary

Each of the foster youth similarly expressed the importance of feeling accepted, respected, and understood in the classroom. Also, the foster youth conveyed how they felt different than the other students because they were in foster care. Faith reported that some foster children have a hard time getting through the school day. Because of going through traumatic situations, they have a lot going on outside of school, and they often blame themselves, shut the world down around them, become shy or introverted, but some focus more on their education.

The participants interviewed explained their perception of teacher autonomy support in the classroom as feeling accepted, respected, understood, and the class has a ‘family-like’ atmosphere. Teacher-student relationships are inescapable in this theme. However, the subthemes mentioned are the vital aspects of relationship building in the words of foster youth. Ava and Hazel scored higher on perceived autonomy support on the Learning Climate Questionnaire, and they both emphasized how they viewed school as a haven; this metaphor is powerful!

Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement

The second theme centered on confidence, trustworthiness, and encouragement (see Table 4). This theme arose from interview questions based on numbers four and eight on the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Those questions are stated below:
LCQ4: My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the class.

LCQ8: I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.

To begin with, trustworthiness is understood by these foster youth as the students trusting the teacher when the teacher earns their trust. To demonstrate, Faith understood trust as sensing distrust in her teachers because she feared what they might do or say. She worried about them not liking her and ‘ganging up’ on her. However, Asher saw trusting a teacher as bonding and establishing a relationship with that teacher. Asher said, knowing that your teacher wants “nothing but the best for you then that motivates people even to want to do work for themselves and get that diploma for themselves.”

Relationships are built on trust. Hazel trusted all of her teachers because they helped her. Therefore, her teachers earned her trust through their actions. Moreover, Ava’s philosophy about believing her teachers was that she knew how hard they worked because she saw the lesson plans and she observed them working hard. Hence, her teachers earned her trust because she felt that they were trying their best to make sure that she learned. Seeing how hard her teachers worked resulted in Ava trusting her teachers. Ava admitted that if her teachers did not work hard that she may not trust them to teach her. Consequently, being able to trust your teacher is teacher autonomy supportive.

On the flip side, a teacher showing trust in a student is when the teacher is confident in that student’s abilities. A teacher having confidence in a student’s abilities is what the foster youth in this study considered teacher autonomy support. For instance, Hazel conveyed that when a teacher gave her challenging work and helped her to succeed this means they trust that she can do well and have confidence in her abilities.
Next, the foster youth believed that encouragement is a vital part of teacher autonomy support because through the teacher’s words of encouragement the students know they have confidence in them.

Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>18, 20, 21, 36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>33, 34, 35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>18, 19, 37</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,

I kind of felt like you can’t really trust just any and everybody, but also it was like, I kind of feared that the teachers that I felt like were for me were in contact with the teachers who weren’t. I don’t know. If that makes sense I just had this fear that they didn’t or none of them cared for me, so I never really trusted a lot of them.

Hazel stated,

I have a lot of trust in all of my teachers. When a teacher is confident in me, they give me challenging work, they tell me I’m smart, that I should do better, that I have it in me to succeed, not to give up, not to get frustrated, to stay calm, and they always help me.

Asher stated,

When teachers put forth the effort to let you know that they are here to support you as human beings and they want nothing but the best for you then that motivates people to even want to do work for themselves and get that diploma for themselves. Because sometimes, nowadays, foster kids don’t care about it because they don’t even get to see their parents, or they are not around to see siblings, or they are stuck in group homes. So, they don’t care about work. But, when a teacher sits them down and talk to them one on one and, bond for a moment with them...sometimes that will touch some of these children to want a diploma and want to be successful.

Ava stated,

I think I feel trust in my teachers because I know they are going to do their job to the best of their ability. At least, I hope they are. I have a really good relationship with most of my teachers and they have a lot of lesson plans. They have a lot of stuff to do after school and so I realize they have a lot of stuff that they have to do. So, I know they are doing their best and they are trying their hardest. And if someone is working that hard to make sure that I learn. What’s not
to trust? And it’s important that they are trying that hard because if they were not
doing their job just because they didn’t feel like it I wouldn’t be able to succeed
like I am.

Theme 2 Summary

The foster youth in this research investigation expressed trust, confidence, and
encouragement as being interrelated. Teachers may not realize that they must earn the
trust of their students, but according to the results of this study they must.
Trustworthiness, confidence, and encouragement go hand in hand because a teacher can
earn the trust of a student by helping them and show the student that they have
confidence in them. These foster youths implied that a teacher’s choice of words and
actions are encouraging or discouraging to students; they earn trust or distrust, and they
show a student they have confidence in them or not. To summarize, having confidence in
a student’s abilities, being trustworthy, and encouraging are all teacher autonomy
supportive behaviors.

Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class

The third theme centers on understanding the goal of the class. Teachers
encouraging students to ask questions and teachers answering student’s questions fully
and carefully to ensure students understand the goal of the class are viewed by the foster
youth in this study as teacher autonomy support (see Table 5). This theme is based on
questions six, seven, and nine of the Learning Climate Questionnaire. The questions
from the Learning Climate Questionnaire are as follows:

LCQ6: My teacher made sure that I really understood the goals of the course and
what I needed to do.

LCQ7: My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.
LCQ9: My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.

The categories listed in table five include both positive and negative experiences of the foster youth in this study. For example, Faith and Asher both reported a time when a teacher refused to answer their questions, but I counted this as those students believing that being encouraged to ask questions is beneficial to their learning; thus, teacher autonomy supportive.

Another instance of teacher autonomy support and the importance of teachers encouraging questions is the way that Hazel described her teacher playing a ‘mind game.’ She pointed out that this is how her teacher encouraged questions and made sure they understood the goal of the lesson.

However, Ava specified the profound magnitude in asking questions when she stated that asking questions is one of her learning strategies as a student. She also recounted how her statistics teacher fully elaborates when asked questions by her students. Ava found this extremely helpful and teacher autonomy supportive.

Table 5.  
*Understanding the Goal of the Class*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>n</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Encouraging Questions</td>
<td>27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 38,</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41, 42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Answering Questions</td>
<td>26, 39, 40</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions Fully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Enough Resources</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,

Yes, I do feel like they encouraged me to ask questions if I didn’t understand because I would always get the comment, you look like you’re lost back there. And so, that was one thing that I really liked about it because I never really felt like asking questions because I felt like I would look like I was dumb. But when they encouraged me to ask them, I felt like it was okay to ask them.
My teacher refused to help me when I told her in class that I’m not getting this. The disrespect was reciprocal.

Hazel stated,
They play like a mind game. They play games to see if you are paying attention or not. And if you understand the concept. Most of the kids don’t listen. That’s how they know if you’re paying attention. That’s how they know because they play a game to see who was focused.

Asher stated,
It depends on the question. I might ask a question that dates back to two or three units back. And she will...It depends on her time. Sometimes she has time to help me and sometimes she doesn’t.

Ava stated,
Like I said before, I ask questions like crazy. I don’t think I would be where I am now if I didn’t ask so many questions. Just because I wouldn’t know what I know now. If someone asked me that many questions I would probably be like ‘You need to pay attention.’ But, even if I am paying attention, sometimes I just need to hear it a second time for it to really click. And so, all of my teachers are pretty good with accepting questions when I ask them and doing their best to answer them. No one has ever, or a few times been like yeah, ask me some questions. But even if they are not like that I know that I can ask them questions because they don’t give off that vibe like, ‘Don’t ask me any questions or else you’re going down.’ So, but, in math a lot, I struggle in that area. Even though, I have a high ninety in that class it’s still my weakest point. Some people are like, why are you saying you struggle in math, you have a high ninety in it. But, for me it’s a struggle because it’s not a ninety-nine like everything else is so it’s something that I still work at every single day. I’ve got a lot of questions in math and we are in statistics this year and like even today, I ask questions that might seem dumb to other people but for me because math is something that is not my strong suit, so I have to ask the questions.

Theme 3 Summary

The foster youth in this study believed that asking questions and having teachers answer student’s questions carefully and fully are prime examples of teacher autonomy support. Ava mentioned that she does not remember many times when her teachers energetically encouraged questions, but she always felt like it was okay to ask them. Moreover, Ava believed that if she had not taken it upon herself to ask as many questions as she did, then she would not be where she is now, which is the valedictorian of her high
school graduating class. On the flip side, Asher revealed that he felt like whether the teacher answered his questions fully and carefully depended on the question. Hazel explained her idea of how the teacher made sure that the students in the class understood the goal of the lesson as when the teacher played a mind game and asked the class questions to make sure they understood the goal of the teaching.

Notably, each participant overwhelmingly believed that encouraging questions and answering questions fully are critical elements of teacher autonomy support in the classroom, even if they did not receive that help. Faith and Hazel both remarked that they were always afraid to look dumb if they asked a question, but when the teacher encouraged questions, then they felt that it was okay to ask. Ava said it best when she pointed out that, “asking questions in class is really important because that’s how you learn those small little details.”

There were a variety of responses about how teachers assist students in understanding the goal of the lesson. Some of those methods were encouraging questions, answering student’s questions fully and carefully, and other ways involved teachers questioning students. The data revealed that the foster youth in this study believed that encouraging and answering questions fully is crucial for understanding the goal of the class and therefore, teacher autonomy supportive.

Theme 4: A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening

The fourth theme in this investigation centered on teachers creating a comfortable learning environment where dialogue and listening often occur (see table 6 below). Participant responses to interview questions based on numbers three and ten on the
Learning Climate Questionnaire led to theme four. The questions from the Learning Climate Questionnaire are:

LCQ3: I am able to be open with my teacher during class.

LCQ10: My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.

Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Comfortable Enough in Class to be Open</td>
<td>13, 14, 17, 45</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>15, 16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>43, 44, 46</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,

I don’t think I was able to during class but after class I would let my teacher know what was going on. I would say, like after class, look this is what is going on, or not necessarily details, but like I’m just having a crap day. Some of them would ask me how I am doing because they knew of my situation. So, that’s when I would become open is when they would ask me, but I would never really completely have felt comfortable being open. I just feel like they wouldn’t understand. It wasn’t the place to talk about my emotions.

Hazel stated,

I remember in my 10th grade year, we made a game that we come up with. It was like Candyland, but it was dealing with science. And like, we came up with a game board and we could take it home and play with our family. And like, it was fun because the teacher actually took my idea to play that game and the class enjoyed it.

Yes, and if I don’t get the concept the first time, they will come up with a different way to make me understand it.

Asher stated,

When they allow us to express what our capabilities are because not everyone is on the same page education wise. Some people take time, some people can catch it like that. Some people are visual learners. Some people catch it by just hearing it. There are a whole lot of different capabilities out there.

I’ve got this Spanish teacher who doesn’t, who goes really fast when she’s teaching the stuff. And, it doesn’t. I don’t ever understand the work that she gives me. When I try to talk to her about it, she will be like, you will have to wait until I can catch you up. Or something like that.
Ava stated,

I’m as open as I want to be with a teacher. So, if there is something that I don’t want to say, I don’t say it. But, if there is something that I do, I feel comfortable saying it. Because, they are teachers, so there isn’t very much they are going to ask you besides what’s the answer to this question.

Theme 4 Summary

Feeling comfortable in class is not outwardly mentioned in the Learning Climate Questionnaire, but the word comfortable came up many times throughout the interviews. The foster youth in this study believed that a learning environment that is safe and ‘comfortable’ is most important to be able to engage in conversation. Therefore, a safe and comfortable learning environment is observed by the foster youth in this study as teacher autonomy supportive.

Teacher autonomy support in the classroom is feeling comfortable enough to talk to teachers and be open in class without feeling bad about yourself or experiencing repercussion. Their perspective of teacher autonomy support included having conversations with teachers and in class, as well as when teachers are listening to them.

Listening was also seen as necessary because this is when the teachers observe student needs. Asher noted that “whether the teacher listens to how I would like to do things depends on the teacher, the subject, and the atmosphere of the class.” Asher also announced that students have various learning styles, learning preferences, and capabilities and how essential it is that the teacher ‘listens’ to their students so that they are aware of their differences. Faith reported almost failing a class because a teacher would not listen to the students in the class. A combination of feeling comfortable enough to be open in class and having a dialogue with the teacher and students in the class is another way that these foster youths perceived teacher autonomy support in the
classroom. Moreover, it is also of the opinion of the foster youth in this study that teacher autonomy support occurs during dialogue with the teacher and the teacher listens to their students to detect their learning needs and preferences. Feeling comfortable enough in class to be open with the teacher and engage in dialogue in the class is how these foster youths understand teacher autonomy support in the classroom.

Theme 5: Choices and Options in the Classroom

The fifth theme centered on choices and options in the classroom. Interview questions for this theme center on questions one and fourteen from the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Those questions are:

LCQ1: Teacher provides me with choices and options.

LCQ2: My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.

Moreover, some choices and options that foster youth in this study expressed as teacher autonomy supportive involve optional class materials, resources, taking a moment to learn more about an assignment, optional assignments which target learning styles, preferences, strategies, group/partner work, etc. (see Table 7).
For example, Hazel specifically recounted a time when she used videos and music to learn in class. Hazel also enjoyed creating a game to learn a skill set in science. She viewed these educational activities as teacher autonomy supportive.

However, Faith saw choices and options in the classroom as having the choice to use other materials when she did not have the exact supplies that the teacher prescribed. Faith also reminisced about her track coach, whom she named as being one of the most influential people in her life. When she did not have the money to join the history club, he paid for her to join. Allowing students to organize their folders in a way that the student feels is most beneficial to them, instead of the way the teacher wants it done, was mentioned by Faith as being a suitable choice. The foster youth in this study’s experiences with lack of resources is not uncommon among foster youth and children living in poverty. Having options such as those mentioned by the foster youth in this study is helpful to many students.

On the other hand, Ava appreciated when teachers gave her a minute to make sure she understood a concept before completing an assignment. Having a minute to learn
more about an idea is an excellent learning strategy that could be implemented in the classroom. Providing choices and options in the classroom such as these mentioned are ways that teachers can be autonomy supportive.

Moreover, Asher found it especially helpful when the teacher considered his learning style. He described how difficult it is to learn something when the teacher only lectures because he is not an auditory learner. Instead, Asher affirmed that he is a visual learner, and benefits from pictures, videos, etc. Hence, when a teacher considers learning styles and preferences and allows those options in the classroom, they are autonomy supportive.

Faith stated,

I had one teacher that was also my track coach. He knew more about me than most did. He also had a history club. I love history! I didn’t have the money and I didn’t think I could really come up with the knowledge to be in the history club or be capable of doing anything they did. But, he put me in his club and he paid for me to go. When we had competitions and stuff for it, I was always the one that he chose.

I feel like my biggest struggle in school was … the programs that they would use. Being in the care system, it was hard to get online to use programs or…if that makes sense, like getting online to use programs … that was hard. Systems…like one of my teachers used like a special notebook thing that you had to have certain supplies to make it. That was hard for me because I couldn’t get the stuff, or I couldn’t get online because, for one, I didn’t have internet and if I did, I didn’t have anything to get on it with. I think that went back to organizing and learning styles. I don’t think so. I don’t think it was ever really considered. It was set in stone.

Hazel stated,

Using music and videos to help teach because I like music. Music is everything to me. And when they play music that deals with that subject it’s really cool. It’s in the learning section. It’s like Flocabulary and all of that. It’s vocabulary and they put it into a song and it’s really cool. And then sometimes she actually makes it into a video.

Asher stated,

Some of them do. Some of them actually ask me, ‘Well, what’s a better way for you to learn it?’ And, I will answer, ‘Well, maybe if we do it this way or
that way.’ I tell them that I am a visual learner. Some of them don’t teach visually. Some of them teach verbally. And, a lot of kids don’t get that.

Ava stated,

I think that what I was mostly thinking of was that on a regular school day when we’re doing work you kind of go straight there and you don’t want to do it. And, they don’t give us the choice of being like ‘No, I don’t want to do it,’ but if you don’t understand it, they give you the choice to take a moment for yourself and just kind of figure out what you are doing. I know a lot of times over the years, I haven’t always been the smartest person in the classroom and I still am not. I ask questions like crazy and sometimes I think my teachers are annoyed with me because I ask so many questions, but you don’t learn unless you ask questions. And, more than likely if you’re wondering something, more than likely someone in the class is wondering the same thing so why not take the bullet for both of y’all I guess. So, that’s where I think I have choices in it. That’s the way that I feel towards work and the things they give me in the classroom. They give me the choice to learn more about it in a way to make sure I understand it more before I begin.

In high school there is a lot of independence. Sometimes I like to work by myself. I’m kind of controlling in a way because sometimes I like to get something done quickly. So, they are like, you can do it in a group or you can do it by yourself, you can do it on the computer or you can do it handwritten and stuff like that. So, there are multiple different choices on how to do things. So, you get to put a little piece of yourself in everything that you do.

Theme 5 Summary

Each of the foster youth in this study expressed their desire to help those foster youth coming through school behind them. They viewed providing choices and options in the classroom, especially the ways which they revealed to be helpful to them, as teacher autonomy supportive. Ava pointed out that there are “multiple choices on how to do things.” She went on to say that, “you get to put a little piece of yourself in everything that you do.” Therefore, encouraging students to use their creativity is teacher autonomy supportive!

Research Question One Summary
The five themes that arose involve the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support the classroom. The topics involve the opinions of the youth about teacher autonomy support. Also included are their views regarding how they believe teachers can implement various autonomy supportive teaching strategies.

Research Question Two

RQ2: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement?

The following five themes arose from research question two:

Theme 1: Confidence
Theme 2: Motivation
Theme 3: Inspiration
Theme 4: Emotional States

I gathered data for research question two by utilizing all interview questions based on the Learning Climate Questionnaire. The Learning Climate Questionnaire scores a student’s level of perceived autonomy support. For each question on the Learning Climate Questionnaire, I asked participants how they believed each of the LCQ statements affected their motivation and achievement in the classroom. Next, I coded the data. Altogether, I discovered 212 codes for research question two. I read and reread the codes until the interrelated codes arose into eighty-nine subthemes. Four major themes and supporting subthemes evolved from the interconnected data. Those themes are:

Theme 1: Confidence
The first theme for research question two centered on how teacher autonomy support builds confidence in foster youth. The major ideas in this theme involve how the foster youth feel they become more confident with teacher autonomy support. The significant topics supporting this theme are: teachers showing the foster youth are capable, showing their support for the youth financially or emotionally, and trusting the capabilities of the youth by holding high expectations (see Table 8). The themes arose from the following statements from the Learning Climate Questionnaire:

LCQ2. I feel understood by my instructor.

LCQ4: My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.

LCQ5. I feel that my teacher accepts me.

LCQ15. I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Confidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing they are Capable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support (Financial or Emotional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust (High Expectations)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,

I love history! I didn’t have the money and I didn’t think I could really come up with the knowledge to be in the history club or be capable of doing anything they did. But, he put me in his club and he paid for me to go. When we had competitions and stuff for it, I was always the one that he chose. That motivated me in his class to do better. It kind of gave me the confidence that I can do it, and that it’s all in my mind that I can’t.

Hazel stated,

Yes, they make my motivation very strong because they tell me not to give up. Because it gets frustrating. Because I get frustrated a lot. I
have a hard time learning. But when they tell me not to give up that I’m doing great it makes me really want to work harder. Because hearing that makes me feel good. Yes, I have even have teachers that think of me as their own child.

Asher stated,

And, one teacher stood out to me when she was teaching. It was math too, and it was hard. She was going over the steps. She was making sure we got it as a whole and I know she wasn’t doing it for everyone. I know that she was doing it for me. And, after class, she would pull me to the side and say, ‘Do you understand it?’

Ava stated,

I think my relationships help a lot because I think that if I didn’t have a good relationship with my teacher I wouldn’t feel comfortable to ask the questions that I need to ask on a daily basis. If I don’t understand something, they make me confident in myself to know that if I make a B on something I know that I still have that chance to make an A on the next thing. Even if it’s just a simple quiz or a daily worksheet. They are that kind of backbone support and you don’t really notice it until you’re thinking back and you’re like wow, the teachers really did help me. They do a lot more than you think they do with like lesson plans and everything else and I know I couldn’t do it myself because I’m not that patient, but teachers do a lot for us and they definitely help. Even if they are not the most loving teacher you’ve ever met in your life. Even if they are super strict and their tests are like hard as ...like insanely hard. You get that sense that they are there to help you even if it doesn’t feel like it at the moment. But, when you get finished and you are about to graduate, like I am now, you realize that it was hard, but it was worth it.

Theme 1 Summary

Theme one for research question two encompasses how foster youth perceive that teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement. Confidence arose as a theme because according to the statements by the foster youth in this study, they feel more confident when they are encouraged and allowed to show their capabilities; when supported by their teacher financially or emotionally, and when they are trusted to do well. Being trusted to do well means that the teacher has high expectations for the
student. Furthermore, these foster youths explained ways that teachers can help them to be more confident which supports their motivation and achievement.

For example, Ava stated that when she sees her teachers working hard to create lessons, it shows her that they are supportive of her efforts. She perceived their hard work as them being confident in her ability to learn. Therefore, she knows that they are there to help and support her. Asher explained that he felt more confident, after being out due to surgery, when a teacher pulled him to the side to see if he understood. Furthermore, according to these youth, trust is a two-way street. When the foster youth trust their teacher, they are more confident and motivated to achieve.

Theme 2: Motivation

The second theme for research question two centered on how teacher autonomy support motivates foster youth. Each subtheme describes autonomy supportive behaviors that motivate foster youth (see Table 9). Foster youth are motivated to learn when teachers make information clear and answer questions. Also, teachers motivate students by offering kind words of encouragement and support. The foster youth in this study believed that when teachers listen to how they would like to do things and consider their opinions, it motivates them to achieve. It is the consensus of these foster youth that teacher autonomy support is motivating. The idea of motivation arose from every question on the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Apparently, each statement on the Learning Climate Questionnaire produced feelings of motivation for the foster youth in this study. The Learning Climate Questionnaire statements supporting this theme are below:

   LCQ1: Teacher provides me choices and options.
LCQ2. I feel understood by my instructor.

LCQ3: I am able to be open with my instructor.

LCQ4. My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.

LCQ5. I feel that my teacher accepts me.

LCQ6. My teacher made sure that I really understood the goals of the course and what I needed to do.

LCQ7. My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.

LCQ8. I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.

LCQ9. My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.

LCQ10. My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.

LCQ11. My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.

LCQ12. I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.

LCQ13. I don’t feel very good about the way that my teacher talks to me.

LCQ14. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.

LCQ15: I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.
Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making Information Clear and Answering Questions</td>
<td>43, 60, 61</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/ Encouragement</td>
<td>7, 8, 22, 24, 36, 50, 66, 77</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance / Respect</td>
<td>31, 34, 40, 42, 67, 70</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to and Conversing with Students</td>
<td>3, 45, 55, 62, 63, 65, 75, 78, 80, 83, 89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care/Do Not Care about learning</td>
<td>51, 52, 69, 74, 82, 16, 20, 74, 82, 89</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,

Yes, making it more clear would motivate us more. I think it did because I never really thought I was capable of doing the work, so being encouraged to ask questions motivated me. I think when I’m learning or working towards a goal and I understand better that it helps me to have my questions answered fully.

Hazel stated,

Yes, they make my motivation very strong because they tell me not to give up. Because it gets frustrating. Because I get frustrated a lot. I have a hard time learning. Yes, they make my motivation very strong because they tell me not to give up.

Asher stated,

When teachers put forth the effort to let you know that they are here to support you as human beings and they want nothing but the best for you then that motivates people to even want to do work for themselves and get that diploma for themselves.

Ava stated,

Having my teacher accept me for who I am motivates me to come to class because just like anywhere, if you feel accepted you will more than likely comeback.

Theme 2 Summary

Research question two includes how foster youth or former foster youth perceive teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement. Each item on the
questionnaire consists of teacher autonomy supportive behaviors. Ava explained that when you feel accepted in a place, you will want to come back. The foster youth in this study revealed that they feel motivated when they feel accepted, respected, encouraged, supported, etc. in the classroom. Ava told a story about a particular student in her class as being discriminated against because he had the reputation of being a ‘rowdy’ student and how her teacher turned it around as motivation for that student. In Ava’s eyes, just being accepted into the classroom for who you are is motivating. The foster youth divulged the importance of teachers listening and conversing with students and how teachers can learn so much about them by talking to them. Furthermore, as a result of dialogue, foster youth learn more.

Theme 3: Inspiration

The third theme for research question two centered on how teacher autonomy support inspires foster youth to work for a diploma, be successful, and just plain out work harder (see Table 10). The statements made by the foster youth in this study revealed that autonomy support in the classroom could be inspiring which affects their motivation and achievement. Although motivation and inspiration seem closely related, inspiration arose in this study as a drive arising from within that has a deeper meaning than motivation. Inspiration in this study means to have a specific goal in mind which causes you to work harder with a passion. The following statements in the Learning Climate Questionnaire stimulated the responses from the foster youth in this study which support theme three:

LCQ2. I feel understood by my instructor.

LCQ4. My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.
LCQ6. My teacher made sure that I really understood the goals of the course and what I needed to do.

LCQ8. I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.

LCQ10. My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.

LCQ11. My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.

LCQ12. I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.

LCQ14. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.

LCQ15: I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.

Table 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3: Inspiration</th>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>12, 13, 35, 64, 71</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>14, 46, 57, 64, 72, 84</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Harder</td>
<td>25, 33, 53, 73, 81, 87</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,
Getting my diploma was something that I was not going to lose sight of because I knew that without it I couldn’t really do anything.

Hazel stated,
But when they tell me not to give up that I’m doing great it makes me really want to work harder.

Asher stated,
Sometimes that will touch some of these children to want a diploma.

Ava stated,
And trust to me is important because if you don’t trust anyone you’re not going to get that relationship that we have with our teachers to try to learn because if I didn’t trust them I wouldn’t try to learn what they are teaching because I wouldn’t know if it was a lie or it was the truth. It has to be about what is going to be better in the future.
Theme 3 Summary

Inspiration arose as a theme for research question two when ‘working harder’ did not fall within the category of motivation. Someone can be motivated to go to school every day and work, but when someone is motivated to ‘work harder’ this means to be inspired. Words such as diploma, successful, and work harder ascended from the statements made by foster youth as they answered how teacher autonomy affects your motivation and achievement. Being inspired comes from having a specific goal in mind which motivates a change in behavior.

Theme 4: Emotional State

The fourth theme for research question two centered on how teacher autonomy support affects the emotional state of foster youth which affects their motivation and achievement. The foster youth in this study conveyed that teacher autonomy support affects their emotional state. The statements made by these foster youths clearly portray their opinion that autonomy support or the lack thereof can make them feel comfortable, influence their self-esteem by making them feel good about themselves, or it can make them happy (see Table 11). The Learning Climate Questionnaire statements which incited the foster youth’s responses in which make up the theme about emotional states are as follows:

LCQ1: Teacher provides me choices and options.
LCQ2. I feel understood by my instructor.
LCQ3: I am able to be open with my instructor.
LCQ4. My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.
LCQ5. I feel that my teacher accepts me.
LCQ7. My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.

LCQ8. I feel a lot of trust in my teacher.

LCQ9. My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.

LCQ11. My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.

LCQ13. I don’t feel very good about the way that my teacher talks to me.

LCQ14. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.

LCQ15: I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.

Table 11.  
Theme 4: Emotional State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable/Uncomfortable</td>
<td>5, 6, 15, 38, 47, 48, 79</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>19, 27, 28, 49, 59, 76</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Good/Bad About Self</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy/Unhappy</td>
<td>1, 2, 17, 18, 26, 29, 41, 54, 56, 58, 68, 88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faith stated,
When I do not feel good about the way my teacher talks to me it honestly puts me in a bad mood and I don’t want to do anything else.

Hazel stated,
Hearing that makes me feel good.

Asher stated,
But, if he comes in there with a healthy encouragement, you know encouraging others in a healthy manner then they are going to feel great about themselves and they are going to be able to put aside all of their troubles they had the whole day and they are going to focus on him and what he’s talking about because he gave them a good feeling when they were having a bad one.

Ava stated,
Being able to be open in the classroom really ensures that I am as comfortable as possible and if I am comfortable I can learn without worrying
about anything but the task at hand. It allows me to feel safe in the classroom so that I keep coming back.

Theme 4 Summary

According to the data, each autonomy supportive behavior in the Learning Climate Questionnaire, except for three of them, incited emotions in the foster youths in this study. Feeling comfortable in the classroom, feeling good about oneself, and being happy are the emotions which arose from the data in this study. These foster youths believed that these emotional states are essential to affecting motivation and achievement.

Chapter Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative study which explored the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom as well as how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement. The researcher employed the constant comparative method of analysis to examine the data in combination with the Self-Determination Theory as a lens through this data investigation process. This chapter described the themes taken from the lived experiences of the foster youth or former foster youth. Included in Chapter 5 is a summary and discussion of the results, the limitations, and implications of the study, further research recommendations, and a chapter summary.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative investigation was planned to discover the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom, as well as how they perceive it affects their motivation and achievement. Figure 3 below is a representation of how the foster youth in this study viewed teacher autonomy support in the classroom in correlation with the Self Determination Theory, as well as how they believed it affected them. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement?
To answer these questions, four foster youth or former foster youth were interviewed. A snowball method of sampling was utilized. Of the foster youth, there
were three females and one male. The first participant was a Caucasian female who was eighteen years of age and in college. The second participant was a nineteen-year-old Caucasian female in the eleventh-grade. The third participant was a seventeen-year-old African American male in the eleventh-grade. The fourth participant was a seventeen-year-old Caucasian female in the twelfth grade. The data collected was categorized into five major themes with accompanying subthemes for the first research question, and four major themes with associated subthemes for the second research question.

Findings and Interpretations

The following five themes are based on research question one:

Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like Connection

Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement

Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class

Theme 4: A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening

Theme 5: Choices and Options in the Classroom

Theme 1: Acceptance, Respect, Understanding, and a Family-Like Connection

Each of the foster youth in this study similarly expressed the importance of feeling accepted, respected, and understood in the classroom. These foster youths conveyed how they felt different than the other students because they were in foster care.

Faith reported that,

Some foster children have a hard time getting through the school day. Because of going through traumatic situations, they have a lot going on outside of school. They often blame themselves and shut the world down around them. They become shy and introverted, but some focus more on their education.

The participants interviewed explained their perception of teacher autonomy support in the classroom as feeling accepted, respected, understood, and the class having
a ‘family-like’ atmosphere. Teacher-student relationships are inescapable in this theme. Furthermore, the subthemes mentioned are the vital aspects of relationship building in the words of the foster youth.

Similarly, Sugden (2013) conducted an interpretive phenomenological analysis by which involved a purposive sample of six ‘Looked-After Children’ (children in foster care) between eight and nine years of age. Sugden (2013) discovered three major themes concerning what supports their learning in school. Those three items depict that school to them is a place where they are accepted; a place where they can make choices; and a place which personalizes their learning (Day et al., 2012). School, for these foster children, is an accepting place where they find acknowledgment; this is the first arising theme in Sugden’s (2013) study. These kids see school as a constant and dependable environment which affords them the prospect of collectively belonging to a social group. Moreover, they see the school as a community which offers occasions for playing. Sugden (2013) recapped this theme as follows: “belonging, friends, play and teachers” (p. 373).

Moreover, in a qualitative research study by Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, and Fogarty (2012), eight themes arose which are critical in eliminating obstacles to educational accomplishment among foster youth. These barriers (or needs) developed from the testimonies of 43 out of the 68 Michigan students in attendance at a total of two Kidspeak gatherings. The ages of the participants ranged from 15 to 23.

The first major emerging theme is the importance of having lasting connections with concerned adults (Cheung, Lewin, & Jenkins, 2012; LaCour et al., 2016; Weinberg, Oshiro, & Shea, 2014). Having associations with teachers as well as other grown-ups
who understand their circumstances as students in foster care is the second central matter of interest for foster children (LaCour et al., 2016; Neal, 2017; Sugden, 2013). The foster youth reported that teachers must pay attention to what is happening with their students.

According to Day et al. (2012), the lack of caring relationships with adults, both within and outside of school, was the most pervasive problem among these foster youths. Furthermore, foster youth wish for constant relations with considerate grown-ups external of the school who recognize how to sustain academic achievement. The foster children participating in this study were high school students currently in foster care and college students previously in a foster family. The foster kids in Day et al.’s (2012) research study believed that educational attainment is critically reliant upon the emotional assistance and educational promotion that connections with caring adults can offer (Day et al., 2012; Neal, 2017; Sugden, 2013).

Theme 2: Confidence, Trustworthiness, and Encouragement

The foster youth in this research investigation expressed trust, confidence, and encouragement as being interrelated. Teachers may not realize that they must earn the trust of their students, but according to the results of this study they must. Trustworthiness, confidence, and encouragement go hand in hand because a teacher can earn the trust of a student by helping them and showing the student that they have confidence in them. The foster youths in this study implied that a teacher’s choice of words and actions can be encouraging or discouraging to students; they earn trust or distrust, and they can show a student they have confidence in them or not. To summarize, having confidence in a student’s abilities, being trustworthy, and encouraging are all teacher autonomy supportive behaviors.
Regarding confidence and encouragement, Day et al. (2012), conveyed that one of the participants in their study told a story about two teachers helping them realize that they could go to college, and this being the first time they recognized it; moreover, this support also transformed their mindset. While other foster students told about the forfeit in their educational accomplishment happening because of the absence of helpful, capable teachers. Many of the participants in the study by Day et al. (2012), described how care from teachers assisted them in overcoming the confrontation of academic trials which allowed them to thrive in school. According to Day et al. (2012), the foster kids in their research study believed that educational attainment is critically reliant upon the emotional assistance and educational promotion that connections with caring adults can offer (Day et al., 2012; Neal, 2017; Sugden, 2013).

About emotional support, LaCour et al. (2016) noted encouragement and praise as critical foundations in the creating of a positive classroom environment. According to LaCour et al. (2016), encouragement and praise must be sincere and personalized and equal for all students. Furthermore, to be successful, praise and encouragement must be rendered frequently and reliably (LaCour, 2016; Sugden, 2013).

Likewise, the foster youth in this study believed that encouragement is a vital part of teacher autonomy support because through the teacher’s words of encouragement the students know they have confidence in them. Faith stated that, “When a teacher is confident in me, they give me challenging work, they tell me I’m smart, that I should do better, and that I have it in me to succeed.” Hazel revealed that, “They always tell me not to give up, and not to get frustrated. They always help me, and they always have confidence in me.”
Equally, the findings in this study discovered that when a teacher revealed that they are confident in a student’s abilities then that shows the teacher has trust in that student’s abilities. The foster youth in this study considered this type of trustworthiness and confidence as an autonomy supportive behavior. For instance, Hazel conveyed that when a teacher gave her challenging work and helped her to succeed this means they trust that she can do well and have confidence in her abilities. The teacher trusting that the student can do well shows the teacher is confident in their abilities. This is like what Day et al. (2012) stated about how a teacher’s help can change the mindset of a child.

However, another definition of trust arose and is best described by Ava in this research study. Ava’s philosophy about believing in her teachers was that she knew how hard they worked because she saw the lesson plans and she observed them working hard. Hence, her teachers earned her trust because she felt that they were trying their best to make sure that she learned. Seeing how hard her teachers worked resulted in Ava trusting her teachers. Ava admitted that if her teachers did not work hard that she may not trust them to teach her. Consequently, being able to trust your teacher is teacher autonomy supportive. Day et al. (2012) made a similar statement when discussing the first theme of their study which was that foster youth need educators who are thoughtful and knowledgeable.

Theme 3: Understanding the Goal of the Class

Teachers encouraging students to ask questions and teachers answering student’s questions fully and carefully to ensure students understand the goal of the class are viewed by the foster youth in this study as teacher autonomy support. Hazel recalled the way her teachers make sure her class understands is by playing a ‘mind game’ and asking
questions to see if they are paying attention and they understand. Ava appreciated how her teachers accept questions and fully elaborate to be sure she understands.

Too, LaCour et al. (2016) wrote that the most powerful theme which surfaced in their study was the coordination of discussions in class. Class discussions grant opportunities to facilitate student understanding of how to appropriately respond to other people. Correspondingly, the third theme uncovered by Sugden (2013) summarized the significance of: “the child presenting information regarding their difficulties/areas of lower confidence and considering what could be put in place to increase their confidence” (p. 374).

Theme 4: A Comfortable Learning Environment for Dialogue and Listening

Conversations and engaging dialogue where listening occurs was an important component of autonomy support. Even though feeling comfortable in class is not outwardly mentioned in the Learning Climate Questionnaire utilized in this study, the word comfortable came up many times throughout the interviews. The foster youth in this study believed that a learning environment which is safe and ‘comfortable’ is vital for rich discussions. Therefore, the establishment of a safe and comfortable learning environment for dialogue and listening, was observed by the foster youth in this study as teacher autonomy supportive.

Congruently, LaCour et al. (2016) collected data from sixty-one teachers to discover perceptions and optimum classroom applications which best satisfy the needs of foster youth. These researchers uncovered major themes involving proactive discipline methods to meet the needs of the foster child. All of which are believed to create a positive classroom environment. The researchers analyzed the survey items with an
open-coding system. Categories were established and combined to produce themes. The key issues were: conversations (Kirk & Day, 2011); social connections; role playing; and interaction with classmates (Sugden, 2013). These discoveries divulged that meeting the needs of foster children is vitally dependent on the relationship amongst the teacher and students in a proactively managed classroom setting.

LaCour et al. (2016) also cited examples of personal connections made during conversations. These researchers noted the significance of class discussions which cultivate the development of relationships; the teachers in this study believed that positive teacher-student relationships are critical. Relationship development happens by teachers helping students to feel welcome, cared for, and safe.

Theme 5: Choices and Options in the Classroom

A few of the choices and options that foster youth in this study expressed as teacher autonomy supportive involved optional class materials, a lack of resources, taking a moment to learn more about an assignment, choices and options for class assignments which target learning styles and learning preferences, teaching strategies, group/partner work, etc. Choices and options in the classroom, such as these mentioned, are methods that the foster youth in this study viewed as teacher autonomy supportive.

In a similar way, Sugden’s (2013) study discovered that schools should offer chances for foster children to make choices concerning their life and “academic success and resources and opportunities” (p. 374). Interviews with foster children revealed that a school is a place where they can declare some power over the time ahead of them. In the eyes of these kids, school poses an environment where there are many instructions and involvements, but they can still decide which events are most enjoyable to them. In
this way, school nurtures their capability to establish opinions and possess a personal declaration.

Comparatively, Day et al. (2012) wrote about an emerging theme regarding the importance of young people in foster care to have accommodating, innovative teachers who are responsive to distinct educational needs. Also wanted by the foster children in this study by Day et al. (2012) are for teachers to implement classroom practices involving different learning modalities.

Research Question Two

Although there are many research investigations which studied the needs of foster youth in the classroom, there are not many that investigated the perceptions of foster youth regarding how various teaching behaviors and practices affect foster youth. The second research question in this study examined how the foster youth in this study believed autonomy support affected their motivation and achievement. The following four themes arose from research question two:

Theme 1: Confidence
Theme 2: Motivation
Theme 3: Inspiration
Theme 4: Emotional State

Theme 1: Confidence

Theme one for research question two in this study includes how foster youth perceived that teacher autonomy support affected their motivation and achievement. Confidence arose as a theme because of the statements made by the foster youth in this study during interviews. The foster youth stated that they feel more confident when they
are encouraged and allowed to show their capabilities; when they are supported by their
teacher financially or emotionally, and when they are trusted to do well. Being trusted to
do well means that the teacher has high academic expectations for that student.

Equally, Mih and Mih (2013) posited in their research study that schools’
priorities must be in helping students to develop great self-perceptions concerning
academics and gaining knowledge. Mih and Mih (2013) also suggested the application of
merits like warm-heartedness, kindness, compassion, the devotion of time and care, and
being emotionally available, as being significant in developing an accurate view of one’s
academic identity.

Another example of how a foster youth’s confidence can be affected is explained
in a study by Day et al. (2012). Day et al. (2012) reported the need for foster youth to
have accessibility to suitable mental health amenities. Numerous participants in their
study attested to impending psychological well-being issues which negatively affected
their accomplishment in school, and also being prescribed medications in the place of
mental-health treatment for psychological trauma. Moreover, one youth reported during
an interview that they did not find out they were dyslexic or had test anxiety until they
were in their third year of college. For this youth, having this late diagnosis tore down
their confidence because of constantly having to redo work.

Theme 2: Motivation

This study found that foster youth are motivated to learn when teachers make
information clear and answer their questions fully. Also, foster youth are motivated by
teachers offering kind words of encouragement and support. The foster youth in this
study believed that when teachers listen to how they would like to do things and consider
their opinions, it motivates them to achieve. It is the consensus of these foster youth that teacher autonomy support is motivating.

A similar finding by Sugden (2013) was the third theme which established that the first grown up who championed those foster youth’s academic improvement was their teacher. The students in Sugden’s (2013) study shared that the immediate assistance offered by their teachers was enormously substantial regarding the meaning of daily help and encouragement.

Theme 3: Inspiration

Inspiration arose as a theme for research question two when ‘working harder’ did not fall within the category of motivation. Someone can be motivated to go to school every day and exert effort, but when someone is motivated to ‘work harder’ this means to be inspired. Words such as diploma, successful, and work harder ascended from the statements made by the foster youth in this study as they answered how they believed that teacher autonomy affected their motivation and achievement. Being inspired comes from within, and from having a specific goal in mind which motivates a change in drive and behavior.

Happer, McCreadie, and Aldgate (2006) conducted a study involving thirty-two foster youth who were asked how to encourage the academic results of foster youth. The following five ideas arose in this study concerning what supported these participants to do well; they include involvement with caring individuals; experiencing a stable environment; people having right beliefs about your future; receiving hope, courage, and support; and the ability to contribute and accomplish.

Theme 4: Emotional State
The fourth theme for research question two centered on how teacher autonomy support affects the emotional state of foster youth which in turn affects their motivation and achievement. The foster youth in this study conveyed that teacher autonomy support affects their emotions. Many of the testimonies made by these foster youths clearly portrayed their opinions that autonomy support or the lack there of can make them feel comfortable or uncomfortable, it can influence their self-esteem by making them feel good or bad about themselves, or it can make them happy or unhappy.

Introduction

The themes that emerged in this study highlighted the requirements set forth by four high school or college age foster youth or former foster youth. Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that the fulfillment of basic psychological needs “facilitate growth, integrity and well-being” (p. 82). SDT’s three basic psychological needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Moreover, SDT is made up of six mini-theories, which highlight the importance of meaningful relationships and how a person’s interaction within their social environments can predict significant outcomes in a person’s life. Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasized a “critical theory” which aims to weigh all settings focusing on how basic psychological need satisfaction is either thwarted or supported.

About school, Ryan and Deci (2017) emphasized that although there are numerous pressures on teachers to cultivate the educational achievement of students, it is also important to encourage the growth of the whole child. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), nurturing the progress of the whole child affects results such as “motivation, self-concept, and the vitality and integrity of self-development” (p. 353). In addition, Ryan
and Deci (2017) stated that schools are inescapable progressive settings and they should not do any damage to the growth of the child. Moreover, when conditions are present for encouraging the progress of the whole child, knowledge and achievement results are cultivated too (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In this research, many ideas, which are equally important, are presented about providing a learning climate which fosters the growth of the whole child and one in which foster youth can flourish. Moreover, specific teaching strategies, such as including conversations and discussions in classroom instruction, and encouraging questions and then fully answering those questions are identified by the foster youth in this study as strategies which are beneficial to their motivation and achievement.

Foster youth have unique behavioral and instructional requirements related to the particular circumstances in which they live (Steine-Steele, 2015). Most children in foster care have emotional scars due to abandonment, abuse, neglect, violence, and separation from their families (Emerson & Lovitt, 2008). These experiences can cause emotional, physical, and behavioral problems which impedes their learning (Emerson & Lovitt, 2008).

For children facing hardship, the school must be an actual vital defensive and caring source; the happy and positive influences of education are indeed distinct and compelling for those students who are weakest and who possess a limited support system (Rutter, 1991). Immersions at school hold the potential for encouraging and enduring effects on a student’s societal and academic growth (Rutter, 1991, Sylva, 1994).

Implications for Further Research
Based on the findings of this research, the following questions were developed for further investigation:

1. This study discovered practices that can be implemented in the classroom to provide a learning climate which is beneficial to promoting the self-determination of foster youth. However, additional research should be done to outline the micro steps toward autonomy support that emotionally fragile foster children need from teachers.

2. Further research should be done to discover how other students might benefit from teacher autonomy support in the classroom.

3. Further research should be done to outline specific teaching strategies which are autonomy supportive.

4. Additional research should be implemented to discover how schools can further support foster children who do not achieve.

5. More research should be done to find out how the situations of foster youth are like children living in poverty.

Listed below are themes which arose in this study and are not directly associated with research question one or two:

- The foster youth in this study enjoy engaging in class discussions and hearing the opinions of others.

- Some of the worst days in school for the foster youth in this study were days when parents attend school functions, such as field days, parent breakfasts and luncheons, class parties, award banquets, etc.
• Teachers of the foster children in this study were some of the most influential people in their lives.

• The foster youth in this study attribute their success to having a hard life, their self-determination, and seeing achievements their lives.

• One foster youth in this study believed that her motivation to succeed came from seeing family members who are homeless, hungry, couch surfing, etc.

• Foster youth do not have the same advantages of being able to play recreational sports, take music lessons, learn to swim, go to the library, etc. as other children. They do not have anyone to support and encourage them regarding these endeavors, or to transport them back and forth to games, practices, etc. Extracurricular activities such as these, as well as others, are important in helping foster youth experience achievement, obtain skills for athletics, socialization, reading, music, etc. which will in turn support them in learning self-discipline and experiencing success in life.

• Homework can sometimes be a bad experience for foster youth if they do not understand the work well. If homework must be given, then it should be over skills that students learned in class, and some time should be allowed in class to begin the work so that the teacher is present to help the child if they do not understand.

• The following statements are messages to teachers from the foster youth in this study. The youth replied to this question: What is the message you would like for teachers to know about the foster children in their classroom?
I think that all of us have potential that is kind of left untapped and that we are often scared to show what we are capable of, so I guess I would say that just to give us a chance and that we are not all bad or troubled children, and that we really want to be successful and be creative, but we are often not given the chance (Faith).

Foster kids are going through a lot in their lives that most people don’t know. But it doesn’t mean they should get treated no different than the other students in that class because they are there to learn too and to get their education. And like, they may not get to see their families and all of that, but they are there in school, and that doesn’t change. Because like I said, my school is my family. I don’t get to see my family often. But I have a family that I get to see every day in school. So, I don’t think we should get treated different just because something happens different in our lives (Hazel).

Don’t be so hard on all of them. Don’t be so hard on your whole class because you never know who is sitting there. And, don’t try to start out mean because that makes them feel bad. Just work with them as a whole (Asher).

If teachers always come in and be a light to somebody. Always have a positive attitude, and if a foster kid needs help then I’m sure they will turn to you because you have done nothing but give them kindness and encouragement. Just, you know. They’ll find you (Asher).
I think my relationships help a lot because I think that if I didn’t have a good relationship with my teacher I wouldn’t feel comfortable to ask the questions that I need to ask on a daily basis. If I don’t understand something, they make me confident in myself to know that if I make a B on something I know that I still have that chance to make an A on the next thing. Even if it’s just a simple quiz or a daily worksheet. They are that kind of backbone support and you don’t really notice it until you’re thinking back and you’re like wow, the teachers really did help me. They do a lot more than you think they do with like lesson plans and everything else and I know I couldn’t do it myself because I’m not that patient, but teachers do a lot for us and they definitely help (Ava).

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on high school and college age foster youth and former foster youth who lived within the same state. The participants in this study were all seventeen, eighteen, or nineteen years of age. This research could be further explored to understand the perceptions of foster youth about autonomy support in the classroom across the United States. In addition, this study could explore legislation and possible financial assistances required to supply foster youth with specific school supplies, current technologies, and educational necessities. Also, this study could explore possible mentoring programs and extracurricular activities to support foster youth. Furthermore, an investigation about implementing professional learning opportunities for teachers would be beneficial so that teachers could be better prepared to teach emotionally fragile students such as foster youth.
Conclusion

Foster youth in this study believed that SDT, in the form of teacher autonomy support in the classroom, supports their motivation and helps them to achieve. Each of the themes that arose in this research investigation is equally important because they interrelate with autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Foster youth are some of the most emotionally fragile students in the classroom; thus, if foster youth benefit from the enactment of SDT then all students should benefit. The outcome of this research is worthy of sharing with other educators.
References


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

MERCER INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Ms. Kim S. Ward
1501 Mercer University Drive
Tit College of Education
Macon, GA 31207

RE: Investigating the Education of Foster Children Through a Self-Determination Lens (H1710275)

Dear Ms. Ward:

On behalf of Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research, your application submitted on 09-Oct-2017 for the above referenced protocol was reviewed in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(b) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under category(ies) 6, 7 per 63 FR 50364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 25-Oct-2017. The protocol expires on 14-Oct-2018. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Sample Approvals:
The participants in this study will be selected via purposeful and snowball sampling. I will engage in in-depth interviewing as conversations will be guided by the participant’s answers on the Learning Climate questionnaire, in addition to other questions which consist of questions about school and questions about the foster child relating to school. The interview questions are listed in the interview protocol. Participants will receive a copy of the interview transcripts to guarantee the correctness of the data.

NOTE: Please report to the committee when the protocol is initiated. Report to the Committee immediately any changes in the protocol or consent form and ALL accidents, injuries, and serious or unexpected adverse events that occur to your subjects as a result of this study.

We at the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance are dedicated to providing the best service to our research community. As one of our investigators, we value your feedback and ask that you please take a moment to complete our Satisfaction Survey and help us to improve the quality of our service.

It has been a pleasure working with you and we wish you much success with your project! If you need any further assistance, please feel free to contact our office.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Ava Chamberlain Richardson, Ph.D., CIP, CIOM
Associate Director of Research Compliance Programs (ORPP)
Member
Institutional Review Board

“Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice.”

Mercer University IHEB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone: 478-332-4011 | Email: ORC Mercer@Mercer.edu | Fax: 478-332-3329
1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, Georgia 31207-8001
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER
Investigating the Education of Foster Children Through a Self-Determination Lens

Parent or Guardian Informed Consent

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study entitled, Investigating the Education of Foster Children Through a Self-Determination Lens. The study is being conducted by Kim Ward. The results will be used to further my understanding of the perceptions of foster children and former foster children about teacher autonomy support in the classroom and how teacher autonomy support affects a foster child's motivation and achievement in school. Your child’s participation is voluntary. A decision to participate in the research will not affect his/her relationship with their school, his/her relationship with other teachers, or his/her academic standing.

I. Purpose of Study

This research study is designed to explore the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom, and explore the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement.

The data from this research will be used to inform educators and add to the body of knowledge on how teachers can best support foster children to achieve in school from a curriculum and instruction viewpoint. I am conducting this research as part of the requirements to obtain a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction.

II. Procedures

If you allow your child to volunteer for this study, your child will be asked to complete a Learning Climate questionnaire consisting of 15 questions and should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. I would like to meet and talk with the foster youth or former foster youth about how teachers can best support them in the classroom. The researcher will set up a convenient time to meet with the foster youth at a public location to conduct the interviews. I would like to conduct approximately 3 interviews. During the interview, the researcher (Kim Ward) will ask your child some questions about themselves, about school, and about their answers on the Learning Climate questionnaire. Each interview with your child will take approximately 1 hour.

Your child will be asked to assent to participate in this research (Assent means that your child will be asked to voluntarily participate in this research). Your child will tell the teacher they want to participate by answering YES or NO after the teacher verbally reads to your child what the research is about and what he or she will be asked to do. The researcher (Kim Ward) will engage in approximately three in-depth interviews with your child. The conversations will be guided by your child’s answers on the Learning Climate questionnaire, in addition to other questions which consist of questions about school and questions about the foster child as they relate to school. Participants will receive a copy of each interview transcript for review to guarantee the correctness of the data.

Parent/Parents who allow students to participate must:

Please read the consent form with your child. Tell your child that the researcher is a teacher and they would like for them to answer 15 questions on the Learning Climate questionnaire. The researcher would also like to set up a meeting time and place
to talk about school. The researcher-teacher would like to talk to foster youth or former foster youth about how teachers can help foster youth do well in school. I will need your contact information so that I can contact you to arrange a time and a public place to meet and talk.

III. Potential Benefits to Students and/or Society

Some potential benefits for students and society is the breaking down of barriers in educational attainment to overcome obstacles standing in the path of foster children to a successful future.

Mercer University IRB
Approval Date: 10/25/2017
Protocol Expiration Date: 10/24/2018

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and those have been answered to your satisfaction. Please complete the information below and indicate YES or No to allow your child to participate in this research:

* I, [Name of Parent or Legal Guardian]

*(Indicate permission to participate)*

☐ Yes
* *my child,

Name of Child Participating in Study

* permission to participate in this research study.

Parent/Guardian Name

Date

In order to conduct this research, this project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you believe there is any infringement upon your child’s rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Chair at (478) 301-4101. The IRBs are the governing bodies that are set in place to ensure responsible and safe conduct of research investigations.

Mercer University IRB
Approval Date: 10/25/2017
Protocol Expiration Date: 10/24/2018
Investigating the Education of Foster Children Through a Self-Determination Lens

Parent or Guardian Informed Consent Continued

IV. Potential Risks and Discomforts

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research that could cause you to feel uncomfortable, sad, distressed, or tired.

V. Withdrawal of Participation

Your child's participation is voluntary. Your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits that he/she are otherwise entitled to if you decide that your child will not participate in this research project.

If your child decides to participate in this project, he/she may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You have the right to inspect any instrument or materials related to the proposal. Your request will be honored within a reasonable period after the request is received.

VI. Payment for Participation

Students will not be paid for their participation. There is no financial obligation for participants.

VII. Confidentiality and Data Storage

Extreme precautions will be taken to preserve the absolute confidentiality of each participant including your child. All data, including interview transcriptions, questionnaires, field notes and text, will be stored in a locked cabinet in an office. A false name and a coded number will replace the child's name and will only be used by the researcher (Kim Ward) to identify the child's questionnaire, interview transcription, field notes and text.

Data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the offices of Kim Ward and Dr. Swanson. The interviews will be audio recorded and the only people having access is Kim Ward or Dr. Swanson. The data and recordings will be analyzed and kept in locked storage cabinets in the offices of Kim Ward and Dr. Swanson for three years. After three years all data will be destroyed.

False names and coded numbers will be used to identify your child during the research. Your child's name will not be associated with his or her individual responses and will be identified only by false name or an assigned coded number. At no time will your child's name be associated with the results of the research or shared with parents or others. Any identifying information provided by your child will never be used as part of the research or associated with the results of the study.

Your child's responses will be stored in a locked location and will only be used for research purposes by Mercer University School. A number will identify the information that I collect from the questionnaires and interviews from your child. The list connecting participant numbers and names will also be kept in separate locked cabinets.

Questions about the Research

If you have any questions about the research, please speak with Kim S. Ward. If you have questions later, you may contact Kim Ward at kim.s.ward@live.mercer.edu or Dr. Karen Swanson at swanson_kw@mercer.edu

Mercer University IRB
Approval Date: 10/25/2017
Protocol Expiration Date: 10/24/2018
In order to access these questionnaires you must first register and log into the website. On the registration page you will be asked to agree terms and conditions stating that you will only use the scales for academic research. Once this is complete you will have access to the scales while logged in to the website.

*** Please note that all questionnaires on this web site, developed for research on self-determination theory, are copyrighted. You are welcome to use the instruments for academic (non-commercial) research projects. However, you may not use any of them for any commercial purposes without written permission to do so from Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan. (To inquire about a commercial request, please email info@selfdeterminationtheory.org)
APPENDIX D
LEARNING CLIMATE QUESTIONNAIRE
Perceived Autonomy Support: The Climate Questionnaires

The Learning Climate Questionnaire (LCQ)

The LCQ has a long form containing 15 items and a short form containing 6 of the items. The questionnaire is typically used with respect to specific learning settings, such as a particular class, at the college or graduate school level. Thus, the questions are sometimes adapted slightly, at least in the instructions, so the wording pertains to the particular situation being studied—an organic chemistry class, for example. In these cases, the questions pertain to the autonomy support of an individual instructor, preceptor, or professor. If, however, it is being used to assess a general learning climate in which each student has several instructors, the questions are stated with respect to the autonomy support of the faculty members in general. Below, you will find the 15-item version of the questionnaire, worded in terms of your instructor. If you would like to use the 6-item version, simply reconstitute the questionnaire using only items # 1, 2, 4, 7, 10, and 14.

Scoring: Scores on both the 15-item version and the 6-item version are calculated by averaging the individual item scores. However, for the long version, before averaging the item scores, you must first reverse the score of item 13 (i.e., subtract the score on item 13 from 8 and use the result as the item score for this item—for example, the score of 3, when reversed would become 5). Higher average scores represent a higher level of perceived autonomy support.

*********

Learning Climate Questionnaire

This questionnaire contains items that are related to your experience with your instructor in this class.

Instructors have different styles in dealing with students, and we would like to know more about how you have felt about your encounters with your instructor. Your responses are confidential. Please be honest and candid.

1. I feel that my instructor provides me choices and options.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  6  7
   strongly disagree  neutral  strongly agree

2. I feel understood by my instructor.
3. I am able to be open with my instructor during class.

4. My instructor conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.

5. I feel that my instructor accepts me.

6. My instructor made sure I really understood the goals of the course and what I need to do.

7. My instructor encouraged me to ask questions.

8. I feel a lot of trust in my instructor.
9. My instructor answers my questions fully and carefully.
   
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

10. My instructor listens to how I would like to do things.
    
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

11. My instructor handles people’s emotions very well.
    
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

12. I feel that my instructor cares about me as a person.
    
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

13. I don’t feel very good about the way my instructor talks to me.
    
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

14. My instructor tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.
    
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    strongly disagree neutral strongly agree

15. I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.
    
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    disagree neutral strongly agree

APPENDIX E

CODES
Codes:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about teacher autonomy support in the classroom?

LCQ1. Teacher provides me choices and options:

1. Hard to get Online to use programs
2. Special notebook thing you had to have certain supplies to make it
3. Didn’t have internet
4. Didn’t have anything to get on it with
5. Not a lot of them care as much as the education world goes
6. Worksheet
7. Using music and videos to help
8. Music is everything to me
9. They give you the choice to take a moment for yourself and just kind of figure out what you are doing

LCQ2. I feel understood by my instructor.

10. I was kind of just shy
11. Shut down to the world around me
12. Hard to get through the school day
13. I'm having a hard time at home
14. Lot going on in other places
15. Focused on my education
16. Has come from a traumatic situation
17. Blame myself
18. Relax
19. Take a moment to breathe
20. Teachers really got irritated with that
21. They didn’t care
22. They didn’t want to hear it
23. I don’t think they could understand
24. Consequence
25. Really good relationship
26. Lot others did not understand
27. A relationship with them
28. Relationship
29. Relationship
30. To give you grace
31. Simple stuff you mess up on
32. Everybody deserves
33. Equal line between the classroom
34. I was engaged in class discussions
35. Family connection
36. Felt understood by my teachers
37. Understand me
38. She didn’t reach us
39. Didn’t want to teach us anything
40. Never explained anything
41. Asked for help she said look at your packet
42. Explain to them
43. All I needed at that time was just for them to teach me
44. At that point that was what i was holding onto was being able to come to a
   classroom and it being what it was expected to be
45. You go to school, you have that chance to make yourself better
46. It was something I could immerse myself in without any kind of trepidation
47. Teachers understood me in a way as they were just teachers and that was really all
   i needed
48. Always Help me
49. If I’m down they still help me
50. Don’t give up on me

LCQ3. I am able to be open with my teacher during class:

51. After class I would let my teacher know what was going on.
52. Not necessary details but like I'm just having a crap day
53. Knew of my situation
54. They keep it to them self
55. They give me advice
56. I’m as open as I want to be with a teacher
57. I would never really completely have felt comfortable being open
58. I feel comfortable talking to my teachers about anything
59. I feel comfortable saying it

60. I'm real quiet until I find something that really needs to be said
61. Don’t have to be the loudest in the room you just have to make an appearance
62. She goes really fast when she’s teaching stuff
63. You will have to wait until I can catch you up
64. Only time she can work with me one on one is after school and after school doesn’t really help
65. Hard teacher
66. I would become open is when they would ask me

LCQ4. My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.

67. Also, I feel like the teachers that did believe in me really invested and supported me
68. Constantly telling me that you’re smart
69. Assignments that were a lit bit challenging
70. Did this on purpose because they knew that I should do better
71. Had it in me to do what I wanted to do and succeed
72. They always tell me not to give up
73. Not to get frustrated
74. They keep calm
75. Tell me to try and keep calm
76. They can always help me
77. They always have confidence in me
78. Teachers that really brushed me off
79. Some teachers that seen me as the troubled child
80. I wasn’t necessarily bad in school
81. I had a bad attitude
82. I was kind of bitter
83. I was really bitter toward people
84. My teachers are confident enough in me to do that
85. Caught up on my work and stuff
86. Teachers ask me to do little tasks for them
87. Confident that i will get it done
88. I’ve shown that kind of mentality in the classroom
89. Shown that I’m a dependable person
90. Something that is just dependent on me
91. I portray myself in a way that other people can be confident in me
92. He gives me some slack if i forgot to do an assignment
93. If forgot to print a paper, he gives me some slack
94. Are the only ones that gives me some confidence
95. That’s why I excel in their class

LCQ5. I feel that my teacher accepts me.

96. Some of them were accepting
97. All of my teachers accept me
I depended on my education when nothing else was very dependable. My life was very dependable, and my life was very unstable as a child. Now it’s not unstable. I was accepted in a way and no one was stopping me from coming into the classroom. No one was pushing me out of the classroom. I wasn’t being moved from one place to the other anymore. That was all of the acceptance I needed right there. They can’t accept the fact that some students can’t finish all of their work. They don’t accept the fact that form them to get out of bed and come to school ought to give you a reason why they are trying. I feel that teachers don’t accept not only me, but others. Mr. L will play with him and stuff...will write him up all the time because he disturbs the class, but the problem is not him...it’s the teacher sometimes because he will not only start it, he will finish the so-called argument. He was saying...‘That’s why you can never pass my class’ He shouldn’t ever say something like that. Its like a blanket of hope (being accepted by your teacher) that you have someone that cares and someone that wants you to succeed. It makes you feel unstoppable, like you can go to college. You can have a successful family and a successful life just like anybody else.

LCQ6. My teacher made sure that I really understood the goals of the course and what I needed to do.

We weren’t given enough resources. They play a mind game. Play games to see if you’re paying attention or not. If you understand the concept. Most of the kids don’t listen. They know if you’re paying attention. Play a game to see who was focused. Take the time to ask if me or other students need further explanation. We are always prepared for our assignments. Some of them do and some of them don’t.

LCQ7. My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.

Yes, I do feel like they encouraged me to ask questions if I didn’t understand. When they encouraged me, I felt like it was okay to ask them. They always want me to ask questions.
I used to not ask questions and that’s what made me not do good. I felt like I would look like I was dumb. I used to be scared to ask questions. People would make fun of me. Ask questions like crazy. I know that i can ask them questions because they don’t give off that vibe like ‘Don’t ask me any questions or else you’re going down’.

I ask questions that might seem dumb. Math is not my strong suit I have to ask the questions. Going to be hard on me and I’m ready to get some C’s. Not most of the time.

I have a lot of trust in my teacher.

Felt like you can’t really trust just any and everybody. Had this fear that they didn’t or none of them cared for me. I never really trusted a lot of them. I have a lot of trust in all of my teachers. I know they are going to do their job to the best of their ability. I have a really good relationship with most of my teachers. They have a lot of lesson plans. I know they are doing their best. They are trying their hardest. Working that hard to make sure that I learn. What’s not to trust?

I wouldn’t be able to succeed like I am. When my mother passed away she bought us Christmas. She made us feel like we didn’t have to worry about anything else. Worry about ourselves or take care of ourselves because I was more like the parent in my family.

My teacher answers my questions fully and carefully.

I told her in class that I’m not getting this. She refused to help me. I was probably being disrespectful. I felt like she was against me. Everything she said to me was with disrespect. Now, I probably wouldn’t have done that. Everything was just too serious.
Yes, if I don’t get the concept the first time they will come up with a different way to make me understand. I said asking questions in class is really important because that’s how you learn those small little details that they may have skimmed over. Asking questions, you help the teacher realize that they didn’t go over that. Is really fundamental in my education because if I didn’t have the answers to those.

If they weren’t so welcoming with their elaborations. Making sure that we understood then obviously we wouldn’t understand. Be short or clip answers. Does he think I’m dumb or something? He just would stare at you and later on in the class you’d find out the answer. She would tell me you’re going to have to look in your book. It’s hard for one teacher to go back over a lesson that the class has already went over just for one student. She just didn’t have the time.

My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.

She comes on the first day and hands us a 50-page packet. We told her we didn’t want to have her there anymore because she didn’t teach us. She didn’t teach us anything. I almost failed. Schools are too laid back on what they are teaching the kids. Discipline is front of the line. Has to be discipline. Getting on a personal level with them. If you don’t answer, you’ll have to go to the principal’s office. More personal relationships than just having kind of a straight-line thing. Don’t want to succeed because they have this kind of ‘I have to be a certain way’. We came up with a game board. It was fun. The teacher actually took my idea to play that game. They actually take the time to listen to our ideas. Something that I don’t understand i can raise my hand and be like ‘Can you do this a different way?’ They understand me, and they try to do it a different way.

I don’t think that a teacher needs to baby you. It’s not going to happen in the real world. Make the best of it which isn’t always a bad thing.
189. You not only learn about how you want to do stuff but how other people want to do things as well
190. Get other people’s opinions and mix them up with yours
191. You learn new things more than just sticking with your old ways
192. It depends on the teacher
193. It depends on the subject
194. It just plain out depends on the atmosphere of the class

LCQ11. My teacher handles people’s emotions very well.

195. If you showed any type of negative emotion, you were kind of looked down on
196. Environment had to be neutral all the time
197. Everybody just had to be bold faced
198. They can tell when you are having an off day
199. They can tell when something is bothering me
200. They can tell that I’m different when I’m down
201. They don’t be rude or nothing
202. Try everything to make me laugh or smile
203. All of my teachers love me in their way
204. Sometimes teachers have a hard time understanding a student’s emotions
205. Teachers can’t understand a student’s emotions because it doesn’t work that way
206. You can’t expect that
207. Teenagers are weird
208. I don’t know what I’m thinking half the time ‘How do I expect someone else to know?’
209. One day a student asked and she kind of jumped down his throat
210. It looked real bad on her
211. The one time she blows up on someone it’s on the wrong one.
212. She’s had some bad days where she would cut short on a lot of things
213. She will cut me short
214. She’s a wonderful teacher. She’s my favorite teacher.
215. Then, after class I told her that I was sorry that I didn’t mean to be late
216. She was just like, ‘I’m sorry, I really didn’t mean it. It’s just not a good day.’
217. Some teachers can relate, some can’t.
218. She tried to make it out the door before she started crying but she started crying before she could get out there. The teacher just sat there in dismay and shock. She couldn’t believe what was going on, and she just said, ‘Do we need to have a recess break or something like that?’
219. The class was quiet the whole day or the rest of that time period
220. That girl was going through some other things and the fact that she came to school that day...she tried to get her education.

221. The fact that she came to try to get her education says a lot

222. To say that she’s dumb and don’t know how to do it

223. The teacher wanted to relate, but she couldn’t relate to that

224. Some teachers can relate, and some can’t

225. Me and Mrs. ____ had a very close bond. We both didn’t grow up with riches.

226. The teacher tried but the girl pushed her away. As most foster kids would

227. We barely get something done in that class…there is always some type of scene going on in that class.

LCQ12. I feel that my teacher cares about me as a person.

228. They do to an extent, but they don’t care about anything other than the classroom.

229. I think all of our teachers care about us even if just a little bit

230. Takes a certain kind of person to be a teacher

231. Your job is helping them to succeed

232. I don’t think I’ve ever had a teacher that just didn’t care

233. I’ve had a teacher that was a bit harsh

234. I couldn’t stand her

235. Not to the point to where I was uncomfortable in her class

236. Really hard tests

237. She’s not a very nice person

238. I knew she cared or else she wouldn’t be in front of me teaching

239. Some of them do and some of them don’t

240. Some of them would bring the work and help me catch up. It really said a lot to me that they cared. Not just as a student but as a human being. They think I have a shot at succeeding in life

LCQ13. I don’t feel very good about the way that my teacher talks to me.

241. I just felt like I needed to give up on the work.

242. I would always just try to give up on my work because I didn’t understand it

243. It was too hard for me.

244. My teacher got really upset because I gave up and she yelled at me

245. Other ways besides yelling at me in front of the class.

246. She wrote me up all the time

247. I was probably disrespectful

248. Everything she said to me was with disrespect

249. Everything was just too serious
They talk to me with respect
They talk to me kind
Try to make me smile
Make a joke out of it and it’s funny
I can’t remember a time when my teacher was super disrespectful
They were a little bit short
A lot of people get offended and I don’t mean to be
Sometimes you just have those days
Some teachers will actually go to work thinking they are better than others
That’s them trying to put a shield up trying to make themselves feel better
The main problem is they are shutting down the wrong group of kids.
It just frustrates me sometimes that they forget where they come from

LCQ14. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.

Organizing and learning styles
I don’t think it was ever really considered
Set in stone
They listen to our ideas
We work together to come up with something together, as a team
Teachers are pretty good about understanding other points of view because that’s how you learn at first
Become a teacher is to learn from others
They are very open in that way because every day you learn more and more
You’re not ever going to stop learning and so you might learn something from a 6-year-old and you might learn something from a 9-year-old
A lot of children that see the world in a completely different way than I do
They have so much joy
I am stressed out a lot of the time because of school and college
Teachers are pretty good at listening to other people You have to have the opinion of many to form your own opinion sometimes because that’s how you make the best opinion
That’s how you become a person who is willing to do the best for others because you are willing to listen to others
Some of them actually ask me ‘What’s a better way for you to learn it?’
Well, maybe if we do it this way or that way
I am a visual learner
Some of them don’t teach visually
Some of them teach verbally and a lot of kids don’t get that
LCQ15: I feel able to share my feelings with my instructor.

281. I just feel like they wouldn’t understand
282. It wasn’t the place to talk about my emotions.
283. I have trust in all of my teachers
284. I can like talk to them about pretty much anything
285. Sometimes I don’t really want to share my feelings because I think that’s really weird
286. You don’t want your teacher to know everything
287. I got to both of them a lot for support and a lot of my decisions
288. I was able to speak to them and just like now and in previous years I always go to them.
289. They are kind of like yin and yang
290. Mr. C is a sarcastic and a funny guy
291. He’ll be like kind of harsh sometimes when he thinks that you really need to get something done
292. Mrs. B is really sweet and caring
293. She’s like super caring and like loving so I can go to her when I’m having a bad day
294. I go to Mr. C because he’s real blunt
295. Get their opinions and then form my opinion from all three of theirs plus what I thought to begin with really helps me out
296. I kind of need that background from someone who has done everything in their life
297. He’s like so sarcastic
298. it kills me
299. He will pick on me sometimes
300. I listen to myself more than anyone else
301. Love to get advice from Mr. Can Mrs. B and my mom
302. Ms. L... she’s one of the teachers
303. Hearing the opinions and what people think is just wonderful for me because I would rather someone tell me the truth.
304. Just helps me learn even more
305. You put something out there
306. I’m having a bad day and I come to a teacher hoping they can relate to me or something like that and sometimes they say, ‘I don’t have time, come again another time?’
307. That adds to your day and makes it worse I carried an attitude and I carried it the way I was treated that way or that morning.
RQ2 What are the perceptions of foster youth or former foster youth about how teacher autonomy support affects their motivation and achievement?

LCQ1

1. I always ended up failing classes because I didn't have that stuff
2. Paper pencil option
3. Computer or handwritten
4. Use music
5. It’s really cool it helps me
6. I ask so many questions
7. Wondering the same thing
8. Feel towards work
9. Choice to learn more
10. I understand it more before I begin
11. Willing to look
12. My viewpoint

LCQ2

13. Didn’t have the money
14. Paid for me to go
15. They make my motivation very strong
16. Tell me not to give up
17. They tell me I'm doing great
18. Makes me Really want to work harder
19. Hearing that makes me feel good
20. I get frustrated a lot
21. I don’t understand something they make me confident in myself
22. They are my backbone support
23. Teachers really did help me
24. They do a lot more than you think with like lesson plans
25. They definitely help
26. Even if they are not the most loving teacher you’ve ever met
27. Even if they are super strict
28. Tests are like hard
29. They are there to help
30. It was hare, but it was worth it
31. Hard for teachers to understand a student
32. I really liked that a lot of my teachers didn’t know that I was in foster care
33. They weren’t mean
34. Weren’t too nice
Constant that really kept me going
Want nothing but the best for you then that motivates people to get that diploma for themselves
I was always the one that he chose
Kind of gave me the confidence
All in my mind that I can’t
My relationships help
If I didn’t have a good relationship with my teacher I wouldn’t feel comfortable to ask the questions that I need
To support you as human beings
Teachers sits them down and talk to them one on one
Bond for a moment with them
Sometimes that will touch some of these children
To want a diploma
Want to be successful

Made me a little less motivated that they didn’t understand
I am as comfortable as possible
If i am comfortable I can learn without worrying about anything
It allows me to feel safe in the classroom so that I keep coming back
Trying to pass the class you can’t have a negative vibe
You have to have everything positive
Can’t have problems with the teacher
You are just going to start being mean
Just not focus on the point
He was doing his work
Then when he got him to start taking he just kept talking and the teacher told him you just need to be quiet
He came to school and he didn’t listen to the teacher
He literally sat there and would sleep
I don’t care
Went back to sleep
He got wrote up again
If he would have pulled him to the side and talked to him one-on-one
God only knows what was going on at his household
He could have helped him out
He was wrong for starting the conversation
Telling the kid to shut up
69. My track coach
70. I didn’t have the money
71. I didn’t think I could really come up with the knowledge to be in the history club or be capable of doing anything they did.
72. Put me in his club and paid for me to go
73. I was always the one that he chose
74. Motivated me in his class to do better
75. Gave me confidence that I can do it
76. It’s all in my mind that I can’t
77. They make my motivation very strong
78. They tell me not to give up
79. They tell me I’m doing great
80. Makes me really want to work harder
81. Hearing that makes me feel good
82. If my teacher was always mean mugging me and not respecting me then I wouldn’t feel good about myself
83. He wouldn’t look me in the eye and that was extremely rude
84. It made me feel bad about myself
85. Don’t listen to the reason
86. Teachers respecting you even if it’s just the teacher-student respect
87. ‘Hey, you can do something, And, I’m proud of you’
88. You don’t have to be overly proud
89. Show them that you’re not all the time expecting them to fail
90. I don’t think anyone has ever expected me to fail
91. Teacher is confident in you
92. Even if a teacher doesn’t really expect much at all but they just want you to try. Then, that’s good enough for me
93. A teacher is confident in you and act like a teacher should because they expect you to do the best you can
94. They don’t discriminate towards you
95. Even if you are the quiet kid in the back of the classroom that looks like they aren’t doing their work
96. Treat them with respect
97. If you are a bad kid and you talk all the time
98. Wouldn’t expect the teacher to think ‘Oh, she’s going to fail’
99. They put them in this class and there’s a lot of bad students or what people think are bad students
100. They just assume the worst from him
101. They will be like he is just a crazy kid
102. Literally with disdain, be like I don’t want him in my class because he is kind of rowdy
103. You’ve got to use that rowdiness and make it into something to motivate him to succeed
104. When Isaiah is talking in class and talking about football, Mr. C doesn’t shut him down right away.
105. Like he does that kind of motivation thing and that is something that is really important for a student
106. We don’t know what their home life is like at all
107. You don’t need to know to be a good teacher
108. Be confident in them and let them show their skills
109. Isaiah started to study more
110. May not have the highest GPA but he is doing better
111. He is going around to colleges and he is looking into things
112. He’s still rowdy in class
113. He isn’t the perfect student
114. Mr. C is still motivating
115. Teachers ae kind of like I don’t want him in my class
116. He’s a rowdy student
117. It doesn’t take much to inspire people to want an education
118. It’s the small things that count
119. You are there and are going to be a support system
120. I kind of lost confidence in whether I was going to pass the class because I missed so much school
121. I know that she was doing it for me
122. She would pull me to the side and say, ‘Do you understand it?’
123. We can go to the library and we can work out some of the problems
124. She just built that confidence up for me just to pass my exam

LCQ5

125. Everyone needs support
126. The more support you have the more confident you will be
127. Having my teacher accept me for who I am motivates me to come to class
128. If you feel accepted, you will more than likely come back.
129. I don’t let it get me down
130. A lot of people change. It’s different
131. A lot of new teachers so some of them have different styles that I’m not familiar with
132. I’m used to older teachers, like more mature teachers
133. Younger teachers don’t really do much
134. They rely on technology a lot

**LCQ6**

135. Making it more clear would motivate us more.
136. Fully comprehending something is important to me
137. I can achieve
138. Having a teacher who is happy to help and willing to fill in any gaps I may have on a topic motivates me to continue to ask questions and continue to learn
139. Some kids don’t focus on school ...because there’s other things going on in their life.
140. That takes more...matters more than school does.
141. That’s why you get a lot of kids that drop out.

**LCQ7**

142. I never really thought I was capable of doing the work so being encouraged to ask questions motivated me.
143. I need someone that I can ask questions
144. Sometimes when I need that assurance
145. Just something that I work on
146. I think if my math teacher just completely shut me down every time i asked questions and not elaborated more that i would not be passing that class
147. It’s a bond that teachers have with their students. Sometimes it’s a good bond and sometimes it’s a bad bond.
148. His encouragement is a healthy one, then it’s going to set the tone for the rest of the class period
149. If he comes there with a healthy encouragement you know encouraging others in a healthy manner, then they’re going to feel great about themselves
150. They are going to be able to put aside all of their troubles….and they are going to focus on him and what he’s talking about because he gave them a good feeling when they were having a bad one.

**LCQ8**

151. I don’t think it would be easy to raise your hand in class or ask for help if you didn’t trust them.
152. Trust to me is important
153. If you don’t trust anyone you’re not going to get that relationship that we have with our teachers to try to learn
154. I wouldn’t know if it was a lie or it was the truth
When you spot a troubled teen, they can spot that teen and sometimes that teen will open up and sometimes they won’t. They trust you or they don’t. They just don’t want to throw themselves out there. When that happens, the teen build on that trust. You have a strong foundation.

LCQ9

When I’m learning or working towards a goal I understand better that helps me to have my questions answered fully. Asking questions in class is really important. That’s how you learn those small little details. It kind of agitates me a little bit. I would see what I could take off my schedule to give more time for school, for work, home, anything like that...what can I do? What’s going wrong right now?

LCQ10

Everything has to be different learning. Teachers do a really good job at listening to how i need things to be done in order to understand things. Do a good job in keeping it balanced. I still learn their way which is the correct way on some things. It can’t always be about me. It has to be about what is going to better me in the future. Most teachers do allow us that opportunity but some of them don’t. Express what our capabilities because not everyone is on the same page education wise. Some people take time, some people can catch it like that. Some people are visual learners, some people catch it by just hearing it. There are a whole lot of different capabilities out there.

LCQ11

Everyone has something else going on besides school. Knowing that my teacher is there as a constant support is good enough for me. I don’t need them to understand my every emotion. As long as my teacher respects me that will ensure I continue to enjoy class. Some teachers grow up like that and they don’t know how it is...they know it gets harder every time you progress.
LCQ12

181. Yes, (I think my teacher caring about me as a person) affects my motivation and achievement.
182. Knowing that my teacher is there for me and is teaching me to the best of their ability shows me that they are and knowing that they care encourages me to want to continue to learn and do great things.
183. Some foster parents or parent, mothers or dads or foster care systems or group homes they don’t care. It depends on what’s going on
184. Some kids abuse the teacher as a way to like send messages to get away and get out of group homes

LCQ13

185. Yes, because it honestly puts me in a bad mood
186. I won’t want to do anything else.

LCQ14

187. Make us more comfortable
188. Make it easier for us to retain certain things.
189. Knowing that my teacher at least tries to see things from my perspective is very beneficial because it allows me to be comfortable in stating how I see things in hopes my teacher will guide me down the path of success without being forceful with only their way of doing things.
190. If you show them a way that you can do it. That might spark an idea in their minds that might go by your plan or add to it or they just flip it up and teach it some kind of familiar way and they you are more regulated to learn.
191. She is teaching something that she is not comfortable with, but she is doing it to help you.
192. A lot of teachers want to go by their plan…. doing that same method for years.
193. One day if they flip it up you should feel motivated to take on and get as much as possible you can from that day because she’s probably not going to flip it up like that all the time.

LCQ15

194. I think they would understand more about the situation
195. I wouldn’t have to worry about it getting in the way of academics
196. Being able to tell my teachers how I feel and knowing that they will be there and help me through whatever it is
197. Support me really helps me to be confident in myself
198. Motivates me to succeed
199. Emotions play a big part in life
200. They tell us if someone is happy or upset or frustrated, or anything like agitated
201. It’s all about the trust
202. What’s going on
203. You automatically snap on them
204. They are wanting to just be helpful
205. What’s going on and can we help you?
206. I want some help
207. No, I don’t need any help
208. If he accepts it, that should make him feel better that he got something off of his chest
209. That should make the teacher more reliable
210. He also trusted him or her
211. Should make the teacher inspired and put some more into their teaching to get through to that person
212. Make the student more motivated to take heed and get the knowledge that they need, and to study and to pass