

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF OHIO ONLINE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS
AND THE INFLUENCE ON COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS

by

Danielle Nicholle Formen

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of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership/Educational Technology

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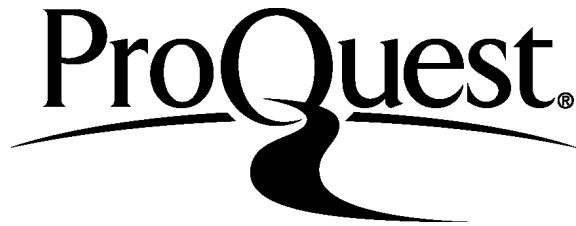
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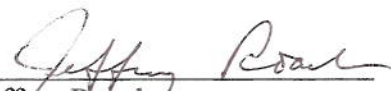
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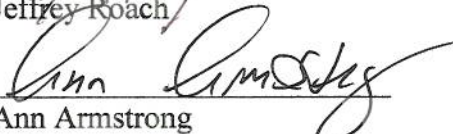
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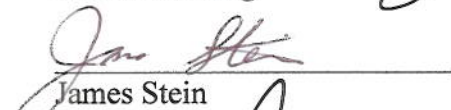
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ABSTRACT

A general problem is that the limited research on online dual enrollment programs (ODEPs) reveals these programs may not be as effective as face-to-face dual enrollment programs (DEPs) in adequately preparing students to transition to college. This qualitative, transcendental-phenomenological study used in-depth interview data to explore students' lived experiences with an ODEP and perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to their college preparedness. The sample consisted of 8, Ohio college students who enrolled in and completed at least one online dual enrollment (ODE) course while attending a large, urban school district in central Ohio high school. Life course theory, motivation, and student involvement provided a conceptual framework for the study. The success and ability of students to persist in a postsecondary environment relates directly to their socio-cultural backgrounds, motivation to succeed, and involvement in school-related activities. Inconsistencies with the implementation of ODEPs are raising concerns about the effectiveness of these programs to increase student achievement and preparedness. As students reflected on their lived experiences with an ODEP and shared their perceptions, the three core themes emerged. The three core themes were adapting to college culture, ODEPs as a positive stepping stone, and skills gained from ODEPs. The study will allow leaders in education to understand better, how ODEPs contribute to the college preparedness of students.

DEDICATION

Jesus paid it ALL.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10 ESV

"God is Love, and he who abides in Love abides in God, and God in him." —1 John 4:16

The Lord wants to be better than your best friend and closer than the most loving spouse. He wants a deep, personal relationship with you that is beyond words. "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2:9). Receive His love freely, personally, deeply, and totally.

PRAY FROM YOUR HEART THIS PRAYER:

"Lord Jesus, I believe You died for me and that you are alive and listening to me now. Lord Jesus, I ask You to forgive my sins and save me from eternal separation from God. By faith, I accept Your work and death on the cross as sufficient payment for my sins. I repent of my sins and ask Your forgiveness. From this moment on, I decide to live for You and no longer for myself. Please fill me with the Holy Spirit and give me the strength, wisdom, and determination to walk in the center of Your will. Thank You for providing the way for me to know You and to have a relationship with my heavenly Father. Through faith in You, I have eternal life. I love You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

Your life belongs to Jesus. You have made the most important decision in life.

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I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Ann Armstrong and Dr. James Stein. Without your patience, feedback, and guidance, I would not have completed this journey. Thank you Dr. Stein for providing feedback while recognizing and applauding my efforts. Thank you Dr. Armstrong for the extensive feedback, examples, and push to do better.

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I would like to thank my family – The Fantastic Formens!, friends (old and new), and church family at Westerville Alliance Church (soon to be Hope Church; thisishope.org) for the support and prayers. My family and friends remained supportive and caring even when we went weeks or months without talking. It takes a special person to understand the commitment to this process – GRACIAS! I am grateful to have so many special people in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Contents | Page |
|--|------|
| List of Tables | xi |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Background of the Problem | 2 |
| Dual enrollment and student success | 6 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 7 |
| Purpose of the Study | 9 |
| Population and Sample | 9 |
| Significance of the Problem..... | 10 |
| Significance of the study..... | 11 |
| Significance of the study to leadership | 12 |
| Nature of the Study | 13 |
| Overview of the research method | 14 |
| Overview of the design appropriateness | 14 |
| Research Questions..... | 15 |
| Conceptual Framework..... | 16 |
| Life course theory and anticipatory socialization | 17 |
| Motivation and self-determination theories | 19 |
| Student involvement and persistence..... | 22 |
| Definitions of the Terms | 25 |
| Assumptions..... | 30 |
| Scope and Limitations..... | 31 |
| Scope..... | 31 |
| Limitations | 31 |
| Delimitations..... | 32 |
| Summary | 32 |
| Chapter 2: Review of the Literature..... | 35 |
| Title Searches, Articles, Research Documents, and Journals | 36 |
| Method and Design..... | 37 |
| History of Dual Enrollment | 38 |
| Conceptual Overview..... | 40 |
| Dual enrollment and life course theory..... | 41 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Dual enrollment and student motivation..... | 42 |
| Dual enrollment and student involvement | 45 |
| Current Research on College Readiness | 47 |
| Postsecondary remediation | 55 |
| Current Research on Dual Enrollment..... | 57 |
| Authentic college experiences | 59 |
| Secondary and postsecondary partnerships | 62 |
| Current Research on ODEPs..... | 67 |
| ODEPs in Ohio | 70 |
| Impediments to Dual Enrollment..... | 72 |
| Funding | 73 |
| Access and resources | 73 |
| Quality concerns | 74 |
| Transferability..... | 77 |
| Conclusion | 78 |
| Summary..... | 81 |
| Chapter 3: Method | 84 |
| Research Method and Design Appropriateness | 84 |
| Qualitative method..... | 85 |
| Phenomenological design | 86 |
| Research Questions..... | 88 |
| Population | 89 |
| Sampling Frame | 89 |
| Informed Consent..... | 94 |
| Confidentiality | 94 |
| Geographic Location..... | 95 |
| Data Collection and Instrumentation | 96 |
| Field test..... | 97 |
| Interviews..... | 99 |
| Role of the researcher | 103 |
| Transcription | 103 |
| Credibility and Transferability..... | 104 |
| Credibility | 104 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Transferability..... | 105 |
| Data Analysis | 106 |
| Summary | 107 |
| Chapter 4: Results | 109 |
| Data Collection Process | 109 |
| Recruitment and Saturation..... | 110 |
| Interviews..... | 112 |
| Data Analysis | 113 |
| Horizonalization..... | 113 |
| Reduction and Elimination | 113 |
| Clustering and Labeling..... | 114 |
| Textural-Structural Descriptions..... | 114 |
| Core Themes and Initial Findings..... | 114 |
| Theme 1: Adapting to college culture..... | 115 |
| Subtheme 1: Different expectations..... | 117 |
| Subtheme 2: Harder workload | 117 |
| Subtheme 3: Finding balance | 118 |
| Subtheme 4: Self-Reliant | 118 |
| Subtheme 5: Paying for an education | 119 |
| Subtheme 6: Following a syllabus | 119 |
| Theme 2: ODEPs as a positive stepping stone..... | 120 |
| Subtheme 1: Exposure to college..... | 122 |
| Subtheme 2: Good experience or opportunity | 123 |
| Subtheme 3: Helps to prepare | 123 |
| Subtheme 4: Earned college credit | 124 |
| Subtheme 5: Free | 124 |
| Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs..... | 124 |
| Subtheme 1: Time management..... | 126 |
| Subtheme 2: Writing | 127 |
| Subtheme 3: Help seeking | 128 |
| Subtheme 4: Studying | 128 |
| Subtheme 5: Reading | 129 |
| Subtheme 6: Research..... | 129 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Subtheme 7: Note taking..... | 129 |
| Subtheme 8: Exam taking | 129 |
| Summary | 130 |
| Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations | 131 |
| Interpretations and Implications | 132 |
| Theme 1: Adapting to college culture..... | 133 |
| Subtheme 1: Different expectations..... | 134 |
| Subtheme 2: Harder workload | 134 |
| Subtheme 3: Finding balance..... | 135 |
| Subtheme 4: Self-Reliant | 137 |
| Subtheme 5: Paying for education | 138 |
| Subtheme 6: Following a syllabus | 139 |
| Theme 2: ODEPs as a positive stepping stone..... | 139 |
| Subtheme 1: Exposure to college..... | 140 |
| Subtheme 2: Good experience or opportunity | 140 |
| Subtheme 3: Helps to prepare | 140 |
| Subtheme 4: Earned college credit | 141 |
| Subtheme 5: Free | 141 |
| Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs..... | 142 |
| Subtheme 1: Time management..... | 142 |
| Subtheme 2: Writing..... | 143 |
| Subtheme 3: Help seeking | 143 |
| Subtheme 4: Studying | 144 |
| Subtheme 5: Reading..... | 144 |
| Subtheme 6: Research..... | 144 |
| Subtheme 7: Note taking..... | 144 |
| Subtheme 8: Exam taking | 145 |
| Summary of Findings..... | 145 |
| Responses to Core Research Question..... | 147 |
| Negative impact on preparation | 149 |
| Positive impact on preparation..... | 150 |
| Recommendations..... | 150 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Recommendations for key stakeholders | 151 |
| Recommendations for further study..... | 154 |
| Conclusion | 155 |
| References | 158 |
| Appendix A: Solicitation Email..... | 178 |
| Appendix B: Informed Consent Form for Participants 18 and Older..... | 180 |
| Appendix C: Non-Disclosure Agreement (3 rd Party Transcription)..... | 183 |
| Appendix D: Field Test Interview Protocol..... | 185 |
| Appendix E: Final Interview Protocol | 189 |
| Appendix F: Interview Questions and Objectives | 194 |
| Appendix G: Textural-Structural Descriptions..... | 198 |
| Biography..... | 207 |

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Documentation of References..... 37

Table 2: Field Test Feedback & Recommendations 99

Table 3: Study Participant Characteristics 111

Table 4: Subthemes and Percentages of Participant Responses to Theme 1: Adapting to College Culture 115

Table 5: Frequency of Adapting to College Culture in Participants Responses..... 116

Table 6: Subthemes and Percentages of Participant Responses to Theme 2: ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone 121

Table 7: Frequency of ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone in Participants Responses 122

Table 8: Subthemes and Percentages of Participant Responses to Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs..... 125

Table 9: Frequency of Skills Gained from ODEPs in Participants Responses..... 126

Table 10: Perceived Positive and Negative Impacts of ODEPs on Preparation for College 149

Chapter 1

Introduction

Scholastic reforms in the United States continue to gain momentum and national attention. The educational reform movement in the United States initiated with the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* in 1983 (Kessinger, 2011; Putney & Morris, 2011). *A Nation at Risk* gave a glimpse into the mediocrity of education in the United States and revealed a trend of U.S. students falling further behind other industrialized nations (Mettern & Wyatt, 2012). Educational reforms in the United States are unique to the country and its history.

Educational reforms in the United States mainly have addressed two issues, equality issues and a standards movement with increased competition (Orfield, 1999). High schools continue to receive criticism for not preparing students adequately to succeed beyond secondary education (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). In an effort to increase high school graduation rates and encourage college enrollment, many schools are turning to accelerated learning opportunities (Cassidy, Keating, & Young, 2010; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Schools are providing students with more challenging curricula through Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment programs (DEPs) that also allow students to earn dual credit (Cassidy et al., 2010; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Dual Enrollment Programs (DEPs) are an example of accelerated learning opportunities that began as early as 1976 with the state of California leading the efforts (Mokher & McLendon, 2009). A lack of rigor in high school curricula and an increased need for remedial classes in the first year of college led policymakers to enact several changes

(Young, Joyner, & Slate, 2013). Leaders in secondary and postsecondary schools began collaborating to prepare students better for the transition to college-level coursework (Mokher & McLendon, 2009). Many high schools established a partnership with local institutions of higher education (IHEs) to provide students with free or discounted courses (An, 2013). Many high school students are able to enroll in college-level courses through DEPs and earn dual credit concurrently (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). These DEPs benefit high school students by offering them an early start on college coursework (Thelin & Taczak, 2013; Young, Joyner, & Slate, 2013). Accelerated learning opportunities that offer students numerous benefits help to encourage and build lifelong learners.

Chapter 1 includes background on the need for accelerated learning opportunities in the United States. This chapter includes a background on DEPs in the United States as well as the increasingly popular online dual enrollment programs (ODEPs).

Understanding the concerns with ODEPs and the potential of these programs to prepare students for college is important to policymakers who advocate DEPs. The statement of the problem and the purpose of the study, as indicated in Chapter 1, demonstrate the importance and benefits of the research to educational leaders and institutions.

Background of the Problem

In 1971, the Carnegie Commission suggested changes for higher education in the United States including a three-year bachelor's degree program (Hebert, 2001). A national survey conducted during the same year revealed that the material covered during a student's senior year of high school overlaps with first year college material (Hebert, 2001). Secondary and postsecondary institutions throughout the United States began

working to create a smoother transition to an IHE for high school students. In addition to a smoother transition, policymakers and leaders in education urged high schools to increase rigor and offer students a variety of courses to pique their interest, primarily during their senior year (Cassidy et al., 2010; Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Throughout the United States, students are unchallenged in school and many students believe that their classes are too easy (Boser & Rosenthal, 2012). Students report a lack of engaging activities, challenges, and an understanding of the questions their teachers ask them (Boser & Rosenthal, 2012). With increased rigor and courses that appeal to students' personal interests, American schools are trying to increase graduation rates and instill a desire for lifelong learning.

Often, students who drop out of school before graduating high school cite a lack of courses that interest them and classes that they believe are irrelevant to their future as two of the main reasons for leaving (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Coupled with decreased interests, an increasing number of students feel alienated and need better support for making informed choices about transitioning into higher education (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Dual enrollment programs intend to provide students with a head start on their postsecondary experience and to motivate them to pursue higher learning opportunities (Carlson, 2013; Ozmun, 2013; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Dual enrollment programs have had positive effects on students' persistence in and the decision to attend an IHE, but a lack of evidence revealing if these programs, specifically the online programs, enhance student learning or adequately prepare students remains an apprehension (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Recent studies for students in DEPs are raising concern about

student preparedness and an oversight of the curriculum covered in DEPs (Ozmun, 2013; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Leaders and proponents of ODEPs believe that these programs are helping students reach postsecondary studies, and although some benefits of DEPs are undeniable, there is a lack of research on ODEPs (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Harris & Stovall, 2013; Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Reisberg, 1998; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Whissemore, 2012). Results of several studies found that students who completed DEPs on a college campus reaped a greater benefit than students who were not on a campus (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ozmun, 2013; Whissemore, 2012). Education is a gateway to more opportunities for millions of individuals and ODEPs are helping to increase the number of individuals who have access to education.

Students from various backgrounds do not have access to rigorous learning opportunities in several subject areas (Boser & Rosenthal, 2012). Perceptions of inadequacy stem from not only postsecondary institutions but also from government and private institutions (Kessinger, 2011; Smith, Schiano, & Lattanzio, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). The federal government's Race to the Top initiative of 2009 called public schools to transform education so that students in the United States would be able to outperform workers globally (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). President Barack Obama challenged postsecondary institutions in the United States to graduate the highest number of highly skilled individuals by the year 2020 (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). Several initiatives in education are an attempt to decrease mediocrity and increase student success. Dual enrollment programs provide academic enrichment, accelerates learning opportunities in areas lacking those opportunities, and provides a

glimpse into the rigors of college and future career paths (Harris & Stovall, 2013; Kronholz, 2011; Stone, Alfeld, & Pearson, 2008). Completing DEPs potentially allow students to finish their freshman and sophomore years of college upon high school graduation (Kronholz, 2011; Reisberg, 1998; Thelin & Taczak, 2013). Students who often feel as though they are tired of school may see the potential for DEPs to accelerate their degree attainment.

Cassidy et al. (2010) agreed with several researchers who found that accelerated learning programs provide students with increased motivation and self-confidence to succeed as well as financial incentives to help decrease the cost of postsecondary education. Although many researchers agree that there are numerous benefits to dual enrollment, research is limited on the dynamics of DEPs (Ganzert, 2012; Howley, Howley, Howley, & Duncan, 2013; & Johnson & Brophy, 2006). With various sources providing data about DEPs, literature lacks a consistent approach to define, identify, and implement DEPs, specifically ODEPs (Johnson & Brophy, 2006; Muhammad, 2011). Research on students who transitioned into postsecondary education after completing an ODEP is especially sparse because of the advances in online education (Mead, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011).

Inconsistencies with the implementation of ODEPs are increasing and raising concerns about the effectiveness of these programs to increase student achievement (Ganzert, 2012; Shaughnessy, 2009; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Changing the method of delivery from face-to-face to an online environment requires students to become autonomous and self-determined learners (Mitchell, 2012; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). The success many students experienced with face-to-face DEPs can vary greatly with ODEPs,

and research is insufficient to determine if students receive the same degree of preparedness from ODEPs (Mitchell, 2012; Muhammad, 2011; Ozmun, 2013). The inconsistencies and lack of research on ODEPs interrupt the college preparedness of students and falsely may equip them with a sense of preparedness.

Dual enrollment and student success. Increasing student achievement in high schools and encouraging college enrollment is important for students from diverse backgrounds. By the end of the 20th century, high schools graduated more than 70% of students (Putney & Morris, 2011). Although this is an improvement, the number of students from working class and poor families entering four-year, postsecondary institutions have progressed minimally (Putney & Morris, 2011). The number of students continuing their education beyond high school and choosing to attend college has increased, but a disparity remains between the socioeconomic status (SES) of students (An, 2013). Students with a high-SES background are more likely to attend and complete college than students with a low-SES background (An, 2013). Students who are economically disadvantaged are also less likely to encounter rigorous learning opportunities and report difficulties understanding the content covered by their teachers (Boser & Rosenthal, 2012). Dual enrollment programs and online learning expose students in remote areas to learning opportunities that might not be available in their area.

Dual enrollment programs vary by the school district, but the goal is to allow high school students earn college credit. Traditionally, DEPs offered high-achieving students with a more rigorous curriculum, but it has become a vehicle to promote enrollment in higher education for underserved student populations (Ashburn, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2010; Harris & Stovall, 2013; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009). The type of DEP

varies between partnerships and that variation has led to increased debate over the benefits of dual enrollment. One of the biggest hurdles with DEPs is that schools struggle to maintain courses at the college level (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Several research studies have shown promising results for the success of DEPs, but poor tactics for evaluating these programs could be revealing blurred results (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Online dual enrollment programs are a form of DEPs that allow students to earn dual credit simultaneously through distance or virtual learning. Studies have shown that students, who complete DEPs on a college campus, often gain greater transitional benefits than students who study on a high school campus or online (Ozmun, 2013). Several of the benefits gained through face-to-face DEPs may be lacking in ODEPs and equipping students with a false sense of college preparedness.

Statement of the Problem

The general problem is that the limited research on ODEPs reveals these programs may not be as effective as face-to-face DEPs in adequately preparing students to transition to college. Some researchers believe that a physical presence on a college campus is enough to motivate students, particularly those who have not established a college identity (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). According to Cassidy et al. (2010), the opportunity for high school students to attend college courses on the campus increases their preparation for college rigor, level of comfort, and reduces apprehension when they begin their college journey. There is a lack of research revealing if enrollment in an ODEP provides students with the same level of preparation, comfort, and decreased feelings of intimidation as face-to-face DEPs (Mead, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011).

Since ODEPs differ from traditional DEPs in their method of delivery, the specific problem is it is unclear whether college students who have completed online dual enrollment courses perceive those courses to have adequately prepared them for college. Although online programs are growing popular in the United States, some believe that they lack rigor and supervision that leads to cheating (Davies, Howell, & Petrie, 2010; Simonson 2012). Recent studies for students in DEPs are raising concern about student preparedness and an oversight of the curriculum covered in DEPs, particularly ODEPs (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Critics of ODEPs question how these programs are preparing students adequately for postsecondary instruction when they lack several college components (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Whissemore, 2012). Students enrolled in ODEPs believe that they are completing college-level coursework, but colleges may decrease the rigor or allow more flexibility to retain students (Ganzert, 2012; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). In a case study by Thelin and Taczak (2013), results revealed that many college professors had a difficult time maintaining rigor in the classroom when younger students were present. Flexibility for students in an ODEP can range from additional time to complete assignments, increased teacher assistance, guided activities, and opportunities to redo or rewrite papers (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). To increase understanding about how ODEPs prepare students for the postsecondary transition, a qualitative method, with a phenomenological design was used to explore the perceptions of Ohio college students who completed ODEPs while in high school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio contributed to their college preparedness. A qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the phenomenon occurred in its natural environment and portrayed the problem in a multifaceted manner (Leedy & Ormrod, 2009). Phenomenology was appropriate for this study because it focuses on the experiences of individuals and their interpretation of the world (Hammersley, 2004). Researchers do not attempt to explain individuals' experiences, but instead describe those lived experiences (Adams & Manen, 2008; Hammersley, 2004; Van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011). A phenomenological approach allowed students to describe their lived experiences in an ODEP and perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to their college preparedness (Adams & Manen, 2008; Hammersley, 2004; Van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011). Students chosen to participate in this study did so in their natural college setting and in an environment comfortable for describing their experiences.

Population and Sample

The general population for this study consisted of the 2 million high school students enrolled in DEPs throughout the United States; including ODEPs (Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). The sample frame was composed of the more than 1000 Ohio high school students who complete ODEPs each year (Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, 2013). The specific target population consisted of the Ohio college students who met the study's participant criteria. Purposive sampling provided the study with a sample consisting of 8 college students who were graduated from a large, urban

school district in central Ohio. The study's participant criteria included students who enrolled in and completed at least one online dual enrollment (ODE) course while in high school, maintained a cumulative high school grade point average of 2.5 or higher, and currently attend a four-year college in Ohio. Students enrolled in online colleges or universities did not qualify for this study.

Purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because it is strategic and seeks information-rich individuals (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010; Patton, 2002).

Guarte and Barrios (2006) stated that the size of the sample in purposive sampling is the researcher's decision. According to Palys (2008), when a researcher engages in purposive sampling, he or she sees sampling as strategic choices to determine with whom and how to conduct research.

Significance of the Problem

This qualitative, phenomenological study extends the literature on dual enrollment programs throughout thousands of schools in the United States. A gap in the research reveals that students enrolled in online dual enrollment programs may not reap the same benefits as students enrolled in traditional, face-to-face dual enrollment programs (Cassidy et al., 2010; Mead, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). Students participating in this study provided valuable information about the benefits of ODEPs. There are many misconceptions about online learning programs, and this study revealed the benefits and problems associated with online learning programs by exploring students' perceptions about how ODEPs contributed to their college preparedness. An individual's personal life experience is immediately accessible to them and allows them to describe a situation,

event, or phenomenon in a way that no other person can (Adam & Manen, 2008).

Current and past literature on DEPs incorporated student feedback, but there is a lack of research on ODEPs and student perceptions of these programs.

Significance of the study. Legislators find DEPs attractive because they strengthen the alignment between K12 schools and postsecondary institutions to create a smoother transition for students (Hunt & Carroll, 2006; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). Studies conducted by the National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR) revealed that students who completed DEPs were 12% more likely to attend college and 7% more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree (Whissemore, 2012). The ESCCO (n.d.a) advocates for DEPs and believes these programs can lead to more informed decisions about future education and vocations, allow students to experience college-level rigor, increase achievement in high school, eliminate duplicate courses, and may reduce college tuition costs and the time to degree attainment.

The benefits from DEPs vary because these programs are offered to students of various ages and through several modes of delivery (Ozmun, 2013; Thelin & Taczak, 2013; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Proponents of DEPs assume that high school students have the mental and emotional maturity to enroll in college-level courses (Thelin & Taczak, 2013). Studies have shown that DEPs receive criticism for failing to maintain college-level rigor, high school students who lack the mental and emotional maturity needed to complete college-level courses, and a lack of online learning that requires students to have high levels of motivation and autonomy (Edward & Rule, 2013; Ozmun, 2013; Thelin & Taczak, 2013; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Whissemore, 2012). Online

dual enrollment programs may require the same of students but further research is necessary.

Online learning is growing rapidly in the United States, particularly in postsecondary institutions (Bowen, Nygren, Lack, & Chingos, 2013; Edwards & Rule, 2013; Peterson, 2013; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). As secondary schools work fiercely to improve learning and access for students across America, and with decreased funding, online learning becomes a viable option for students and schools (Bowen et al., 2013). Regardless of the reasons many secondary schools have yet to embrace online learning fully, many researchers believe that nearly 50% of courses will occur online by the year 2019 (Peterson, 2013). Postsecondary institutions offer many courses online and it would be advantageous for secondary schools to offer courses using a medium that students will likely encounter at the postsecondary level (Peterson, 2013).

Research on ODEPs is scarce and often includes research about face-to-face DEPs, with no distinction made between the two (Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Muhammad, 2011). This study focused on ODEPs. Online dual enrollment programs allow students to complete college courses from the comfort of their high school campus (Hebert, 2001). If students can complete college courses from the safety of their high school while reaping the same benefits that face-to-face DEPs offer, the results of this study will be significant in various ways. Students, administrators, teachers, and legislators can use the results of the study to understand better how ODEPs contribute to the college preparedness of students.

Significance of the study to leadership. Educational leaders and policymakers at the national, state, and local levels continue to advocate for the crusade to increase

academic rigor and college preparedness for students (Hooker & Brand, 2010; Stone et al., 2008). Policymakers progressively urge secondary and postsecondary institutions to work collaboratively (Hugo, 2001). According to Hooker and Brand (2010), nearly 13 million American students drop out of school annually, resulting in approximately 7,200 students dropping out daily. Dual enrollment programs came along as one possible solution for remediating many of the problems encountered with transitioning high school students into the college. Proponents of DEPs promote DEPs as a method for preparing high school students for the rigorous workload they will encounter at the college level (An, 2013). If DEPs can increase graduation rates, encourage college enrollment, and reduce the need for remedial college courses, the challenge for educational leaders is to develop DEPs that ensure students receive the maximum benefit.

Adjusting to campus life is another obstacle that many students will face when transitioning to college that can severely affect their academics. Results from the study may also provide researchers with suggestions for increasing a sense of belonging for students to compensate for the lack of a physical campus presence. Understanding the results of this study and others, enables policymakers, secondary and postsecondary institutions, administrators, and teachers to develop plans for more effective and consistent online dual enrollment programs. Developing more effective ODEPs ensure that students enrolled are receiving benefits equal to their peers enrolled in traditional DEPs.

Nature of the Study

This study is unique because it used self-reported data from in-depth interviews of students who completed ODEPs in high school and transitioned to an IHE. Interviews

were used as the primary source of data collection. The research design and method provided the study with detailed and intimate perspectives from the participants about their experiences in ODEPs and college readiness. Other research designs may focus on numerical data or tracking student progress rather than exploring students' experiences and their perceptions on how ODEPs contributed to their preparedness.

Overview of the research method. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio contributed to their college preparedness. Using a qualitative method was appropriate for the purpose of the study. A qualitative method is appropriate for research that does not seek numerical data or largely generalizable results (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010). The focus of this study was on 8 college students who completed at least one online dual enrollment course while in high school. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research allows the researcher to delve into a particular phenomenon and provide readers with an in-depth description of the study findings (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner; Leedy & Ormrod, 2009). This study used a qualitative method to extend current studies on DEPs, to include ODEPs, student experiences, and perceptions of how ODEPs are preparing these students for higher education.

Overview of the design appropriateness. This study used a transcendental-phenomenological design to address the research question. Phenomenology is a reflective study and common in education when trying to understand how students or teachers experience a phenomenon (Adams & Manen, 2008). This study targeted students who enrolled in college after graduating and completing an ODEP while in high

school. Students participating in this study provided data while in their natural setting. Phenomenological studies are descriptive and reveal how others experience the world (Hammersley, 2004; Seamon 2010). In-depth interviews provided the study with data relevant to the research question.

Although each student in this study completed an ODEP, findings from one student to the next could vary greatly and provide the study with multiple sources of data (Stacks, 2013). Other qualitative designs, like case studies, ethnography, and grounded theory were not appropriate for this study. Similar to phenomenology, case studies are also descriptive, but these studies do not seek to explore how individuals make meaning and experience the world (Adams & Manen, 2008; Hammersley, 2004; Seamon, 2010). Researchers employing a phenomenological design, study how people experience the world, but do not attempt to evaluate, validate, or explain their experiences (Hammersley, 2004). Phenomenology reveals various perspectives of the world or a shared experience (Hammersley, 2004). Results from this study revealed a common essence of how students experienced ODEPs. The use of a phenomenological design provided insight into how well ODEPs are preparing students for college from the students' perceptions.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and understand college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio contributed to their college preparedness. The study focused on one research question to explore students' experiences with an ODEP, and their perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to or hindered college preparedness. Exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of students who completed an ODEP in

high school and transitioned into higher education provided a framework to explore the student preparedness phenomenon. Limited research reveals little about the benefits provided to students enrolled in ODEPs (Mitchell, 2012; Muhammad, 2011; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Providing an answer to the research question could reveal that ODEPs provide students with a false sense of college preparedness and an experience lacking the benefits to studying on a college campus. The research question guided this qualitative, phenomenological study:

RQ1: How do college students, who completed an online dual enrollment program while in high school, perceive the impact that the ODEP had on preparation for college?

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio contributed to their college preparedness. Policymakers and leaders in education have worked to improve education in the United States. Dual enrollment is an attempt for educational institutions to work collaboratively toward student success. There are several concerns with the consistency of DEPs and the type of benefits students enrolled in ODEPs truly receive, but the primary goal is to prepare students for success beyond high school (An, 2013; Carlson, 2013; Karp, 2012; Ozmun, 2013). Life course theory, motivation, and student involvement provided a conceptual framework for the study.

Using the terms theoretical and conceptual framework synonymously is common in qualitative research without an absolute definition or guide to using one or the other

(Green, 2014). The definitions of theory and concepts are open to interpretation that results in the interchangeable use of theoretical and conceptual (Green, 2014). According to Green (2014), a theoretical framework is used when one theory supports the study and a conceptual framework is used when various concepts from theories guide the study. A conceptual framework was appropriate for this study that explored the experiences and perceptions of students who completed ODEPs. The success and ability of students to persist in a postsecondary environment relates directly to their socio-cultural backgrounds, motivation to succeed, and involvement in school-related activities.

Life course theory and anticipatory socialization. Dual enrollment programs benefit students from diverse backgrounds (Ashburn, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2010; Hebert, 2001; Hunt & Carroll, 2006; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009). Some students are privileged or victim to a different life course based on their family's history (Elder, 1998). Researchers associated with the life course theory believed that the events and decisions made by that individual and his or her ancestors heavily influences their life course (Elder, 1998). The approach focuses on the connection between individuals and the historical and socioeconomic context in which these individuals lived.

According to Elder (1998), an individual's developmental implications are based on his or her life course. Historical forces like family, education, and work influence a person's behavior and development (Elder, 1998). Many individuals select the path they will follow, but many life choices are a result of the opportunities or restraints of that person's social, structural, and cultural contexts (Elder, 1998). Elder (1998) believed that the individuals' ability to make certain choices in life are subject to the constraints of his or her history.

The life course theory examines the social dynamic of linked lives and the connection of people across several generations, allowing researchers to identify and examine the innumerable changes that influence children today (Elder, 1998). Early transitions can have lasting consequences for individuals and set in motion cumulating advantages and disadvantages (Elder, 1998). Students from different socio-cultural backgrounds will have different opportunities and restraints influencing their life course. Opportunities and exposure to new social, structural, and cultural contexts may have a profound change on an individual's life course or path.

According to Mechur Karp (2012), more than 50% of college students seeking an associate's or bachelor's degree needed one to two additional years to complete a two- or four-year program. Furthermore, approximately 32% of students do not return after their first year (Mechur Karp, 2012). A high school student's transition into a college role can be very difficult for students, but there are a number of ways to ease the transition (Mechur Karp, 2012).

Dual enrollment programs offer high school students an opportunity to acclimate to the college classroom experience and identify the expectations, reducing the amount of time it takes to adjust during their first semester (Mechur Karp, 2012). Additionally, anticipatory socialization allows students to learn about and begin exhibiting the values and behaviors of those whom they aspire to pattern their lives (Mechur Karp, 2012). Students who visualize themselves as college students by watching others can embody that role, but not completely (Mechur Karp, 2012).

Mechur Karp (2012) suggested that students engage in role rehearsal or practice for the role in which they envision themselves. Students participating in DEPs that occur

on a college campus not only get to model themselves after college students, but they also have the opportunity to practice the role. Attending courses on the college campus through DEPs enable students to discover the norms, expectations, and behaviors needed for college success (Mechur Karp, 2012). Students enrolled in ODEPs are only experiencing a small amount of what anticipatory socialization has to offer, but it can provide an opportunity to change a student's life course.

Motivation and self-determination theories. The challenge for secondary institutions to provide students with optimal learning experiences and increase student motivation is the drive behind DEPs. Motivation can be internal or external and various factors influence motivation. Current motivation theories include autonomy, interest, competence or self-worth, relatedness, drive reduction, arousal, and self-determination (Ormrod, 2008; Murray, 2011). These theories of motivation shape the way students feel about learning and fuels their drive for learning.

Murray (2011) believed that interest was a key feature of intrinsic motivation and self-determination. Several studies have identified a lack of interest for high school students during the senior year (Reisberg, 1998). In education, self-determination is concerned with building a student's interest in education and increasing self-confidence (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Students who internalize educational values and are intrinsically motivated often experience optimal outcomes in education (Deci et al., 1991). Students who feel capable and confident are less likely to feel out of place or behind everyone else.

There is much debate about what causes one person to persevere and another to accept failure. Neuroscientist Gilbert Gottlieb revealed that an individual's genes and

environment influence one another and genes need input from the environment to function properly (Dweck, 2006). Scientists found that people have more capacity for lifelong learning than previously thought and a student's environment can affect his or her mindset (Dweck, 2006). Dweck (2006) identified two mindsets that individuals often prescribe to, a fixed or growth mindset. According to Dweck (2006), an individual's mindset affects how he or she views his or herself and influences the way he or she will lead life. A student's experiences, training, personal effort, and aptitudes will influence the mindset that a student adopts (Dweck, 2006). Teachers need an understanding of mindsets and how they can encourage a growth mindset that may help students, who lack motivation, succeed.

A fixed mindset has no recipe for overcoming failure and individuals with this mindset believe that they have innate characteristics that they have to make work for themselves (Dweck, 2006). Students with a fixed mindset avoid challenge and lack effort because if they try, and fail, they do not have any excuses, effort could reveal their flaws (Dweck, 2006). For many students, the transition to college is a challenge and a crisis (Dweck, 2006). Students who have a growth mindset thrive on challenge and believe that they can grow and cultivate their desires through personal effort (Dweck, 2006). Teachers and parents can help students develop a growth mindset by establishing high standards, providing a nourishing atmosphere, and teaching them the growth mindset with a passion for learning (Dweck, 2006). Students need to embrace challenge and learn to overcome failure. Many students with a fixed mindset lack the motivation and self-determination needed to persevere in a postsecondary institution.

Motivational and self-determination theories relate because the actions of motivated individuals are self-determined (Deci et al., 1991). When actions or behaviors are self-determined, the governing process is choice and individuals make decisions based on self (Deci et al., 1991). Successful students are self-determined and self-regulate (Cohen, 2012; Deci et al., 1991). Students who possess self-regulation can self-reflect, self-monitor, self-evaluate, and have strong metacognitive skills (Cohen, 2012). Self-regulated learners have an interest in the material they learn, are prepared to ask questions when they do not understand, and are motivated to learn (Cohen, 2012).

Establishing a learning environment in which students feel a sense of autonomy are self-directed, and have a choice in how they complete assignments can increase intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated students take responsibility for their learning and do not act based on anticipated rewards (Deci et al., 1991). Student competence fosters motivation, establishes future expectations, and determines if a student is willing to take on more challenging content (Seifert, 2004).

Dual enrollment programs encourage students to tackle challenging content during their senior year of high school to avoid a decline in learning before continuing into postsecondary learning (Reisberg, 1998; Seifert, 2004). When students feel as if they are capable, an environment of self-worth and relatedness are established. Murray (2011) defined relatedness as an individual's need to feel connected to others and belong. Murray (2011) believed that a sense of belonging is as important as fostering intrinsic motivation. A vital component of any DEP needs a strong foundation in motivational and self-determination theories (Murray, 2011; Ozmun, 2013). Although self-determined

students are autonomous, involvement and inclusion are essential to academic success (Murray, 2011).

Student involvement and persistence. Student retention and the rates at which students graduate has increasingly gained focus in higher education (Tinto, 2007). Surprisingly, some institutions have increased graduation rates, but many have not. The national student persistence and graduation rate have changed very little since the late 1990s (Tinto, 2007). Traditionally, schools attributed a lack of student retention to less able and motivated students who sought immediate benefits rather than delaying them until after graduation (Tinto, 2007). In 1970, researchers and leaders in education began to understand that student retention was directly associated with a student's environment, institution, and experiences (Tinto, 2007).

The first year of college is critical for students, and there are several transitional stages encountered throughout that first year (Tinto, 1997, 2007). Increased student involvement and interaction with others within the institution of higher education often results in increased persistence and graduation rates (Tinto, 2007). Students who complete an ODEP are not experiencing the physical involvement and interaction with others in an IHE (Muhammad, 2011). Although students will have opportunities to interact and become involved once attending an IHE, inadequate exposure to various elements of college life may deter some students from pursuing higher education.

Education is a critically important element in peoples' lives. If students will submit themselves to the student role, institutions and faculty can work with students to maximize the benefits (Richmond, 1986). In addition to student involvement and retention, institutions need to establish a common goal of intrinsic motivation and

benefits (Richmond, 1986). Students should have meaningful, relevant, and valuable educational experiences (Richmond, 1986). Astin (1999) defined a student's involvement by the amount of energy, physical and mental, allocated to academics. Highly involved students actively participate in on-campus activities, manage time, devote time to study, and engages with faculty and other students (Astin, 1999). Uninvolved students do not spend much time on campus and devote little time to their studies (Astin, 1999). For students who have not established a college identity or do not live in a community that values higher education, it is critical for high schools to help promote intrinsic motivators and prepare students for an educational path that may not provide immediate benefits.

Involvement in the classroom is particularly critical during the first year of college (Tinto, 1997, 2007). Tinto (1997, 2007) believed that classroom involvement is a vital element because it is the once place where a majority of involvement occurs with members of the same institution. Research has shown that classrooms shape student persistence, but few studies have revealed how (Tinto, 1997). One of the major issues with retention is that institutions identify it as an area to take action, but the implementation of effective retention strategies are missing (Tinto, 2007).

Collaborative learning environments and a supportive group of peers enables students to become active campus participants and add to their intellectual wealth (Tinto, 1997). Involvement is not easy to achieve for students who do not reside or spend time on the college campus, but it correlates to student persistence, especially for students in an urban environment (Tinto, 1997). Secondary and postsecondary institutions need to commit to the resources needed and confront the fundamental issues that embolden

student persistence (Tinto, 2007). Monetary resources may pose a problem for many institutions, but there is a need to identify strategies to overcome those issues.

Levels of involvement change based on the object or time of involvement (Astin, 1999). The level of involvement is different for each individual and can vary for an individual in different settings. Involvement is quantitative and qualitative with its effectiveness in student achievement connected to the quality and quantity of an educational program (Astin, 1999). Astin (1999) identified three pedagogical theories revolving around student involvement and achievement that consists of the subject-matter theory, the resource theory, and the individualized or eclectic theory. Each theory has its strengths and weaknesses.

The subject-matter theory asserts that students learn when exposed to a subject matter that interests them, but involves passive learning with the instructor lecturing or passing on knowledge (Astin, 1999). The resource theory maintains that student learning enhances when there are ample resources available, but ample resources without an effective delivery method are futile (Astin, 1999). The individualized theory assumes that there is not a single approach to learning and teaching that is adequate for each student and provides students with eclectic curricula options (Astin, 1999). Although implementing the individualized theory is difficult because of budget constraints, it may produce the best results of student learning.

Student involvement and persistence relates to a student's experiences and environment in college. College dropouts often relate their negative experiences in college to their decision to drop out (Astin, 1999). Spending time on campus, whether engaging in extracurricular activities or working a campus job, leads to increased student

retention (Astin, 1986, 1999). Knowing that student involvement results in increased retention and persistence rates seems to be one of the main reasons IHEs have agreed to collaborate with postsecondary institutions to increase student achievement. Education is a gateway to more opportunities for millions of individuals and ODEPs are helping to increase the number of individuals who have access to education (Bowen et al., 2013; Shaughnessy, 2009).

Definitions of the Terms

The qualitative, phenomenological study explored how online dual enrollment programs contributed to the preparedness of urban high school students who transitioned into higher education. A qualitative lens, in an educational context, is appropriate for defining and understanding the following terms. Defining terms helps to eliminate inconsistent or vague meanings:

Accelerated learning opportunity. Opportunities that allow high school students to complete coursework that “may earn credit toward a degree from an institution of higher education upon the student’s matriculation to higher education; and in some cases the college credit is based on the attainment of a specified score on an examination” (OPCL, 2008). Some examples of these opportunities include Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate, and some College Tech Prep programs.

Advanced placement (AP). Advanced placement (AP) courses also give students the option to earn college credit, but unlike DEPs, they require students to pass an exam to receive that credit (Hebert, 2001). AP courses are intended for high-achieving and gifted students (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011).

College identity. College students begin to identify themselves within new social statuses encountered during the first year of college and their future positions (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). Future positions rely heavily on professional aspirations and a student's course of study. For the purpose of this paper, college identity refers to high school students who envision themselves as college students. Envisioning their role as a college student working toward a specific major is vital to a college identity.

College readiness. Students are prepared to complete postsecondary coursework successfully and without remediation. Students who are prepared or college ready have the necessary academic skills, motivation, maturity, socio-cultural knowledge, and an understanding of college expectations to persist and progress to degree attainment (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Secondary and postsecondary institutions have varied definitions of college readiness that differ in "focus, scope, and ease of attainment, [but] many consider academic rigor to be a core component" (Wyatt et al., 2012, p. 9). College readiness is also referred to as preparedness.

College-level rigor. College-level rigor is similar to academic rigor but at a level more labor and thought intensive than the academic rigors of high school (Matusевич, O'Conner, & Hargett, 2009; Mettern & Wyatt, 2012). Self-identity and a student's responsibility for his or her learning influence college-level rigor.

Concurrent enrollment. The term concurrent enrollment is often used synonymously with the term dual enrollment. Concurrent enrollment was not aimed toward top achievers and was "meant to challenge high school students who would be bored with the regular high school curriculum and [were] ready to begin college work" (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011, p. 708).

Dual credit. Upon successfully completing a dual enrollment course, a student receives high school credit along with a transcript or credit from the partnering institution of higher education (ESCCO, 2013). Dual credit is also referred to as transcribed credit.

Dual enrollment (DE). Dual enrollment refers to any student, course, or program that earns both high school and college credit concurrently. High school students are dually enrolled in a high school that collaborates with an institution of higher education to provide students with the option to earn dual credit (Ohio Education Matters, 2009; OPCL, 2008).

Dual enrollment program (DEP). As defined by the Ohio Board of Regents, “dual enrollment programs enable students to earn both high school and college credit during high school by participating in a college course at a college or university, offered at the high school, or via distance learning” (Ohio Education Matters, 2009). Examples of dual enrollment programs include Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), Seniors to Sophomores, Early College, and some College Tech Prep programs (OPCL, 2008). Dual Enrollment Programs are supposed to deliver “the same rigorous college content using the same syllabus, texts, and assessments as other college courses” (Hughes, 2010, p. 13).

Early college high school (ECHS). Provides students as young as 14 with the opportunity to accelerate high school completion while completing the first year of college concurrently; similar to the Seniors to Sophomores program (OPCL, 2008; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Early college high school courses take place on a college campus to prepare students to adapt to college life and begin building a college identity (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

High school adjunct (HSA). A high school teacher that teaches DE courses is considered a high school adjunct. High school adjunct have received training and meet the minimum qualifications needed for a college adjunct professor (Marken et al., 2013).

International baccalaureate (IB). The IB program is a combination of academic rigor and international education that enables students to graduate high school with an IB Diploma that is accepted in more than 100 countries worldwide (Walker, 2004). The main objective of the IB program is to "to promote and administer an international examination giving access to higher education in all countries" (Walker, 2004, p. 4). There is a focus on accepting cultural differences and a cumulative exam that requires a passing grade.

Online dual enrollment program (ODEP). Online dual enrollment programs are a form of distance learning (Sheeja, 2011). Online dual enrollment programs differ by school and use the Internet as a means to deliver content, upload assignments, and provide students with feedback. A majority of ODEPs are held on the student's high school campus, during the normal school hours, with high school adjuncts teaching and receiving support from college faculty (ESCCO, 2013). Online Dual Enrollment Programs are supposed to deliver "the same rigorous college content using the same syllabus, texts, and assessments as other college courses" (Hughes, 2010, p. 13).

Outside a DEP. Refers to "high school students who simply enroll in credit courses through [an] institution, and are treated as regular college students" (Marken et al., 2013, p.1).

Postsecondary enrollment options (PSEO). Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) are offered to students in grades 9 through 12. Secondary and postsecondary

institutions collaborate to provide high school students with dual enrollment opportunities that vary by state. The Ohio Department of Education (2008) believed that the purpose of PSEO programs is to offer high school students additional education opportunities that are more enriching than those offered by their high school. In Ohio, PSEO is commonly offered via the Internet with the assistance of a high school adjunct and college professor.

Preparedness. Students are prepared to complete postsecondary coursework successfully without remediation. Students who are prepared or college ready have the necessary academic skills, motivation, maturity, socio-cultural knowledge, and an understanding of college expectations to persist and progress to degree attainment (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Preparedness is also referred to as college readiness.

Senioritis. Chmelynski (2004) defined senioritis as the “tendency of high school seniors to goof off once they have been accepted to college” (p. 33). Senioritis is a serious problem that is often due to a lack of rigor and diminished interest in academic studies (Chmelynski, 2004). Some students experience senioritis as early as their junior year, which can lead to decreased rigor and learning in the classroom (Reisberg, 1998).

Seniors to sophomores. Ohio’s Seniors to Sophomores initiative is just one example of states trying to increase the rigor for students and encourage them to pursue higher education. The initiative permits high school seniors to attend courses on a college campus while finishing their senior year of high school and first year of college concurrently (Cassidy et al., 2010).

Tech Prep. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), tech prep programs “develop systematic links between secondary and postsecondary institutions to better prepare students for high-tech careers” (as cited in Cellini, 2006, p. 395).

Within a DEP. Within a DEP refers to an “organized system with special guidelines that allows high school students to take college-level courses. The guidelines might have to do with entrance or eligibility requirements, funding, limits on course taking, and so on” (Marken et al., 2013, p.1). Early and middle college high schools are considered within a DEP.

Assumptions

The focus of the current research study was on college students who completed online dual enrollment programs while in high school and perceived factors affecting their college preparedness. Assumptions are indispensable to the research study and must be valid to provide meaning to the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Based on the nature of the study, there are assumptions about the research, participants, and outcomes. One assumption was that students involved in this study would be active participants who responded honestly to all questions during the interviews. The study’s participants were assumed to be a diverse sample of students who completed an ODEP in an urban school district, making the sample representative of students completing ODEPs in an urban environment. An assumption was that students were interested in achieving success at the postsecondary level and were sincere in their desire to complete the online courses in which they enrolled. The results of the study did not measure student effort. The researcher only handled data and did not alter the data collected. A final assumption was that the study’s participants would articulate thoughts and experiences with ODEPs to allow themes and patterns to emerge that would provide a comprehensive understanding of students’ perceived levels of college preparedness.

Scope and Limitations

The objective of the study was to collect data from college students in Ohio who completed an ODEP while in high school. The study's design intended to produce valuable information from students regarding their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of ODEPs. The overarching goal of the study was to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of how student experiences in an ODEP contributed to the preparedness of urban high school students who transitioned into higher education. Patterns and themes emerged from the sample of students, from which several generalizations arose. The following details the scope, limitations, and delimitations of the study.

Scope. The scope of the study was limited to the experiences of college students who graduated from a large, urban school district in Ohio and completed an ODEP while in high school. To be a participant, the students had to enroll in and complete at least one ODEP while in high school, maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or higher, and currently attend a four-year college in Ohio. The exploration and descriptive design of the study focused on the students who completed ODEPs and their perceived preparedness for college. Additionally, study participants attend an institution of higher education in the State of Ohio.

Limitations. A limitation of the study was that each experience was subject to varied interpretations. Study results were limited to the responses and personal experiences of the participants, exposing the study to possible bias. The purposive sample of students came from the thousands of students who completed an ODEP in a large, urban school district in central Ohio and transitioned into an institution of higher education. Another limitation to the study was the generalization of the findings.

Because of the participant criteria, the findings of the study may not be generalizable to other students who complete ODEPs. Qualitative methods do not seek numerical data or largely generalizable results (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010; Suter, 2012). A foreseeable limitation of the study was the willingness of students who volunteer to exhibit interest, participate actively, and respond honestly to the in-depths interviews. This was a reasonable limitation because the researcher informed the students of their right to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

Delimitations

Delimitations include what the researcher intends and does not intend to do, including areas that the study will not address (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A delimitation of the study was that the sample included students from one major urban district in Ohio. During the time of research, students attended an institution of higher education located in Ohio. The study explored the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of students who completed an ODEP while in high school. The current study did not address all of the factors that can hinder or produce college readiness. The study focused only on studying students who completed an ODEP in high school and how these programs contributed to the preparedness of urban high school students who transitioned into higher education. The study did not evaluate students' current grades in college or attempt to determine what additional factors affect their college grade point average.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study and the increase of dual enrollment programs in the United States. A number of studies on dual enrollment agree on the potential benefits for students and expose the various problems associated with DEPs. National demands

for primary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions to work collaboratively to better prepare students led to the use of accelerated learning opportunities like dual enrollment (Hooker & Brand, 2010; Hugo, 2011; Kronholz, 2011). Online dual enrollment programs provide students with flexible options and decreased programs costs for schools and families. An attractive option to increase student achievement, but online dual enrollment programs may lack some of the important elements of a DEP that lead to student preparedness (Davies, Howell, & Petrie, 2010; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Whissemore, 2012). It is necessary for leaders in education to gain an in-depth understanding of how ODEPs influence college readiness for high school students.

The conceptual framework of the study provides an understanding of learning theories and concepts, and the application of these concepts to developing effective dual enrollment, encouraging lifelong learning, and ease student transition to college. Life course theory and anticipatory socialization hold that students' life course or experiences are directly influenced by their environment or family history, but DEPs can provide students with an opportunity to experience a new life course (Elder, 1998; Mechur Karp, 2012). Motivation and self-determination theories provide a strong foundation for DEPs and the need for students to fuel their drive for learning (Deci et al., 1991; Murray, 2011). When students take responsibility for their learning and strive to continue learning, retention and persistence rates increase (Astin, 1999; Richmond, 1986; Tinto, 1997, 2007).

The comprehensive literature review of Chapter 2 is a compilation of the scholarly research relevant to the topic of dual enrollment, college readiness, student persistence, and transitioning from secondary to postsecondary institutions. The

literature review investigates the current literature available to support the research and the barriers to effective dual enrollment. Numerous barriers to effective dual enrollment exist from the design to the implementation and evaluation of these programs. Leaders in education require an understanding of the issues, concerns, and possible causes of poor or inconsistent implementation of ODEPs to develop effective programs that increase college readiness.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Dual enrollment is a vehicle to increase academic achievement for a wide range of students, beyond those who exhibit high academics (Howley et al., 2013). Although many researchers agree that there are numerous benefits to dual enrollment, research is limited on the dynamics of DEPs, specifically ODEPs (Howley et al., 2013; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). Research on dual enrollment programs in the United States is limited (Johnson & Brophy, 2006). Johnson and Brophy (2006) conducted a study to explore the reason that students chose to participate in DEPs. The study involved 162 rural-area high school juniors and seniors enrolled in DEPs and the results matched up to many of the findings from other studies. Using a survey and convenience sample of students, Johnson and Brophy (2006) found that a student's SES had a profound impact on a student's decision to attend college. Students believed that DE courses helped relieve senioritis and the wasted senior year, filled with easy classes that students disregard or avoid attending (Ganzert, 2012; Johnson & Brophy, 2006). Dual enrollment offers students who do not see themselves as college goers a viable way to access college (Johnson & Brophy, 2006). Dual enrollment programs can help students acclimate to college life while in high school (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Dual enrollment exists in various forms throughout the United States. Chapter 2 provides an historical overview on DEPs in the United States with an analysis of the current literature about college readiness, DEPs, and the issues associated with ODEPs. Additionally, Chapter 2 discusses students' life course, motivation, and involvement.

Title Searches, Articles, Research Documents, and Journals

With various sources providing data about DEPs, literature lacks a consistent approach to define, identify, and implement DEPs (Johnson & Brophy, 2006). Although many researchers agree that there are numerous benefits to dual enrollment, research is limited on the dynamics of DEPs (Howley et al., 2013 & Johnson & Brophy, 2006). Inconsistencies with the implementation of ODEPs are increasing and raising concerns about the effectiveness of these programs to increase student achievement (Ganzert, 2012; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). These inconsistencies interrupt the college preparedness of students and falsely may equip students with a sense of preparedness. The study will explore the history of DEPs, literature on college readiness, and challenges with ODEPs.

Three main sources provided support for the review of the literature: books, journals, and the Internet. The researcher retrieved peer reviewed journals and articles from ProQuest, EBSCOhost, SAGE Knowledge library, and Eric. The references consist of education journals, digital books, and books obtained through Search Ohio and Ohio Link. Keywords used for searching these databases included, but were not limited to, dual enrollment, concurrent enrollment, online dual enrollment, virtual learning, distance learning, student preparedness, college readiness, postsecondary partnerships, accelerated learning opportunities, education reforms, and remedial courses. The review of literature includes recommended strategies for increasing student preparedness and implementing effective ODEPs. Table 1 displays the types of literature and topics used for the study's design and literature review. Totals are not given as some sources covered multiple topics.

Table 1

Documentation of References

| Topic | Digital and Print Books | Peer Reviewed Articles | Educational, Government & Professional Organizations | Dissertations |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|--|---------------|
| Leadership and Educational Reforms | 1 | 10 | - | 1 |
| Theory | 2 | 11 | - | 1 |
| Online Learning, DEPs, and ODEPs | - | 45 | 8 | 6 |
| College Education , Rigor, and Preparedness | - | 35 | 2 | - |
| Study Design | 16 | 22 | - | - |

Method and Design

Using a qualitative method was appropriate for the purpose of this study. A qualitative method is appropriate for research that does not seek numerical data or largely generalizable results (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010). Qualitative research is appropriate for studying situations that reflect the lives of individuals, groups, and organizations. This study used a qualitative method to extend current studies on DEPs, to include ODEPs, student experiences, and perceptions of how ODEPs are preparing these students for higher education. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is subjective, seeks to understand complexity, refrains from cause and effect, leans toward personal interpretation, and approaches the phenomena holistically (Stake, 1995). This

research method is fluid, and with little information on the impact of ODEPs on student preparedness, unexpected findings may arise.

Phenomenological researchers focus on description and are often motivated by previously ignored research (Hammond et al., 1991). Phenomenological studies are descriptive and reveal how others experience the world (Hammersley, 2004; Seamon). Researchers employing phenomenology do not try to explain why individuals experience the world in the way they do nor do they try to validate those experiences as true or false (Hammersley, 2004). Phenomenology was appropriate for the purpose of this study and provided a design capable of answering the research question. Using transcendental phenomenology allows the researcher to go beyond what is present and uncover hidden meanings (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental-phenomenology was appropriate for this study which sought to uncover the perceptions and lived experiences of the students who completed ODEPs.

History of Dual Enrollment

Often, students who drop out of school before graduating high school cite a lack of courses that interest them and classes that they believe are irrelevant to their future as two of the main reasons for leaving (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Coupled with decreased interests, an increasing number of students feel alienated and need better support for making informed choices about transitioning into higher education (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Many schools are pushing high school curricula down to middle school courses leaving fewer challenging courses in high school (Reisberg, 1998). Successfully completing challenging curricula during middle school resulted in bored and academically unchallenged high school students (Kronholz, 2011). Although a debated

issue in many high schools, senioritis, as defined by Reisberg (1998), is an inexplicable feeling of lethargy that occurs during or months before a student's senior year of high school. Some students experience senioritis as early as their junior year, which can lead to decreased rigor and learning in the classroom (Ganzert, 2012; Reisberg, 1998). Other students develop a need to challenge and prove themselves at the college level. A lack of enthusiasm and challenge during high school leads to decreased motivation to achieve.

Dual enrollment programs intend to give students a head start on their college experience and to motivate them to pursue higher learning opportunities (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Originally a way to target gifted and talented students, proponents of dual enrollment (DE) saw a path to encourage average and even low-achieving students (Kronholz, 2011). Advanced placement (AP) courses also give students the option to earn college credit, but unlike DEPs, they require students to pass an exam to receive that credit (Hebert, 2001). These programs have the potential to expose students to college expectations and knowledge while offering them the chance to enroll in more interesting classes and experience campus life (Cassidy et al., 2010).

Dual enrollment programs have had positive effects on students' persistence in and the decision to attend an IHE, but there is a lack of evidence and research about ODEPs revealing if these programs enhance student learning or adequately prepare students (Ganzert, 2012; Mitchell, 2011; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). Recent studies for students in DEPs are raising concern about student preparedness and an oversight of the curriculum covered in DEPs (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Effective dual enrollment programs require an understanding among all involved parties

regarding the core values, practices, and skills needed for first-year college students (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011).

Proponents of DEPs believe that they can increase the efficiency of education while reducing the amount of time it takes to degree attainment (Lewis & Overman, 2008; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). Researchers agree that DEPs are promising, but need more evidence to determine if these programs are implemented effectively (Lewis & Overman, 2008). Dual enrollment programs vary in the classes offered, where they occur, and who teaches them (Lewis & Overman, 2008; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Researchers, institutions, and educational leaders have differing opinions about where and by whom students enrolled in DEPs receive instruction. Delving further into these attitudes and the types of DE, reveal a strong need for DE regulation and evaluation at the national level (Lewis & Overman, 2008; Whissemore, 2012).

Conceptual Overview

The research explored and identified how online dual enrollment programs contributed to the preparedness of urban high school students who transitioned into higher education. Life course theory, motivation, and student involvement provided a conceptual framework for the study. This conceptual framework was appropriate for the research study as the researcher explored the experiences and perceptions of students who completed ODEPs. The success and ability of students to persist in a postsecondary environment relates directly to their socio-cultural backgrounds, motivation to succeed, and involvement in school-related activities. With various sources providing data about DEPs, literature lacks a consistent approach to define, identify, and implement DEPs (Johnson & Brophy, 2006). Inconsistencies with the implementation of ODEPs are

increasing and raising concerns about the effectiveness of these programs to increase student achievement and preparedness. These inconsistencies interrupt the college preparedness of students and falsely may equip students with a sense of preparedness.

Dual enrollment and life course theory. Culture is often rooted in a belief system shared by members of that culture with similar behaviors, expectations, and communication styles (Putney & Morris, 2011). Historical forces like family, education, and work influence a person's behavior and development (Elder, 1998). Many individuals select the path they will follow, but many life choices are a result of the opportunities or restraints of that person's social, structural, and cultural contexts (Elder, 1998). Dual enrollment opportunities may intervene in a student's life course and move them toward the path of success in higher education.

Institutions of higher education continually revise and update their curricula to ensure students receive a relevant and authentic education for the workforce they will encounter upon graduation (Long & Meglich, 2013). Through an exploratory case study and extensive literature review, Long and Meglich (2013) revealed students who enter college unprepared are more likely to leave college before graduating, need remedial courses, and take longer to obtain a degree (Long & Meglich, 2013). Long and Meglich (2013) explored what educators can do to prepare students for a virtual work environment. Sixty-six college students participated in a virtual, exploratory case study from two different universities in the United States (Long & Meglich, 2013). Preparing high school students for success at the college level ultimately will influence colleges preparing students to enter the workforce.

The workforce is changing rapidly. In 2013, advanced technologies, remote employees, and geographically dispersed organizations are common for many students to encounter (Long & Meglich, 2013). Long and Meglich (2013) found that many graduates struggle to perform in a virtual working environment. Students who completed ODEPs may have a slight advantage when entering the future workforce because of their experiences learning in a virtual environment. The challenge is adequately preparing ODE students to enter and persist in an IHE. Similar to anticipatory socialization, Long and Meglich (2013) cited experiential learning as a valuable tool to increase student preparedness. Students in ODEPs need the opportunity to experience college in an authentic manner that moves theory into practice.

Dual enrollment and student motivation. Support from teachers, family, community, counselors, and a rigorous curriculum can help foster success for urban youth (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Researchers have found that social support for urban students can lead to positive career aspirations and increase self-esteem (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Medvide and Blustein (2010) conducted a consensual qualitative research study with 12 urban students involved in DEPs. This form of research enabled the researchers to explore student narratives in-depth and allowed the students to describe a phenomenon from their perspective (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). The purpose of the study was to examine the educational and career paths of minority students attending an urban high school and voluntarily participating in a DEP (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Twelve high school students provided the study with data from semi-structured interviews consisting of 48 questions. Students in the study revealed that DEPs influenced their future goals, affected their perceptions of college, and many students had

increased confidence and optimism about college after completing a DEP. Unlike, ODEP students, the students participating in Medvide and Blustein's (2010) study attended courses on a college campus and believed that the exposure to the college atmosphere helped them to understand professor expectations.

The results of their research revealed that DEPs influenced career decisions; positively change their perceptions of college, boosted confidence, and increased time-management and organizational skills (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Students involved in the study also revealed that their view of the world changed, and they strove to do more than what others expected of African Americans (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Several of the DE students in the study adopted a college identity and cited increased intrinsic motivation as they grew in their role (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Their study did not include students who lived the college experience and understanding their perceptions of ODEPs may change from the views they had in high school.

Students who are at-risk or uninterested in postsecondary studies can take advantage of DEPs and increase their motivation (Lewis & Overman, 2008). Pretlow and Wathington (2014) believed that various factors influence the effectiveness of DEPs and a student's motivation level, prior to a DEP, might be a bigger determinant of college success. According to Dweck (2006), an individual's mindset affects how he or she views him or herself and influences the way he or she will lead life. A student's experiences, training, personal effort, and aptitudes will influence the mindset that a student adopts (Dweck, 2006). Teachers need an understanding of mindsets and how they can encourage a growth mindset in students who lack the motivation to succeed.

Miller and Slocombe (2012) believed that graduates are entering a new reality of hyper-competition in a global society. The challenge for organizations to succeed or get ahead of other organizations is stifled by countries with access to the same resources and a mimic mentality of developing products similar to what is already available in the global marketplace (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Students need to prepare for a more global, demanding, and competitive workforce. Through an extensive literature review, Miller and Slocombe (2012) sought to explain changes in the United States that led to graduates being unprepared to enter a hypercompetitive, global marketplace. Findings from several sources echo concerns about unprepared students with complacency and denial contributing to a decline in their preparedness (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Miller and Slocombe (2012) found that while students should focus on developing and improving their skills, many are over-confident about their qualifications and feel entitled to the more attractive careers.

The millennial generation consists of individuals born between 1980 and 2001 (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Often, students from the millennial generation are described as entitled with outlandish expectations (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Some Millennials and young people born after 2001 are referred to as Generation Me because they were taught to make themselves priority number one (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). In a survey, 87% of more than 2500 managers and human resource executives found Millennials to feel entitled to more attractive compensation, benefits, and career advancement (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Miller and Slocombe's (2012) review of the literature and previous studies revealed that the educational system in the United States is not mentoring students

to understand the challenges they may encounter after graduation, while motivating them to prepare for those challenges.

Between 1966 and 2009, the percentage of students earning A letter grades increased 153% (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Students' self-confidence and entitlement increased, but academic performance in the United States decreased (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Although students earned higher grades and grade point averages (GPAs), this is often attributed to grade inflation that contributed to a superiority complex (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Researchers have shown that a student's critical thinking, reasoning, and writing skills increased very little throughout four years in college, even with an average GPA of 3.16 (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Students obtaining high GPAs in high school believe that they are college ready, and if new generations of students feel entitled, who or what is motivating them to succeed?

Dual enrollment and student involvement. Research has shown that increased student involvement in postsecondary activities results in increased retention and persistence rates. A literature review, survey method, and qualitative case study revealed that involvement in the classroom is particularly critical during the first year of college (Tinto, 1997, 2007). Tinto (1997) wanted to find out if a coordinated studies program, where students share curriculum and learn together, made a difference for first year students, and if so, how it made a difference. Using two complementary forms of inquiry allowed the researcher to understand what the students experienced and how those experiences changed, along with their changing perceptions of the program (Tinto, 1997). Tinto (1997) observed that often times students take courses that are independent of one another and there is little collaboration between them, if any. Tinto (1997) found that

students involved in the coordinated studies program reported more academic and social involvement that created more positive perceptions of college. Following this group of students after their first year, their persistence in college was much greater than their peers outside of the program (Tinto, 1997). Additionally, results from the being part of a learning community of peers and building relationships are critical during the first year of college.

Tinto (1997, 2007) believed that classroom involvement is a vital element because it is the once place where a majority of involvement occurs with members of the same institution. Increased student involvement and interaction with others within the institution of higher education often results in increased persistence and graduation rates (Tinto, 2007). Students who complete an ODEP are not experiencing the involvement and interaction with others in an IHE. Although students will have opportunities to interact and become involved once attending an IHE, inadequate exposure to various elements of college life may deter some students from pursuing higher education.

Student involvement and persistence relates to a student's experiences and environment in college. The study involvement theory is based on a longitudinal study of college dropouts whose involvement increased with positive experiences (Astin, 1999). College dropouts often relate their negative experiences in college to their decision to drop out (Astin, 1999). Spending time on campus, whether engaging in extracurricular activities or working a campus job, leads to increased student retention (Astin, 1986, 1999). Education is a gateway to more opportunities for millions of individuals and ODEPs are helping to increase the number of individuals who have access to education. An event history analysis of data on DEPs revealed that leaders and proponents of

ODEPs believe that these programs are helping students reach postsecondary studies, and although some benefits are undeniable, there is a lack of research from the students' points of view (Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Reisberg, 1998; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Whissemore, 2012).

Current Research on College Readiness

Compelling evidence supports the belief that students are leaving high school unprepared. A review of literature, and various secondary educational programs throughout the United States led Venezia and Jaeger (2013) to conclude that although many students have college aspirations, an ample amount of students enter college lacking the basic skills, knowledge, and behaviors of successful college students. A student's family, peer, and environmental variables have a profound impact on college readiness (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Beginning in the early 2000s, researchers began documenting the disconnect between high school and college student expectations (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). There is not a standardized method for determining college readiness, but many schools depend on college entrance exams like the ACT and SAT (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). In 2012, only 25% of ACT takers and 43% of SAT takers achieved the minimum needed for a 50% chance of earning the letter grade B during their first year of college (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Even though these results are bleak, standardized tests have not been strong indicators of student preparedness after high school graduation for educational and vocational paths (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Primary and secondary schools do not provide students with enough guidance to make informed decisions about postsecondary education (Stern, 2012). According to Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) nearly 80% of ninth graders fail to graduate college by the

age of 24, high school seniors are writing at juvenile and naïve levels, and a quarter of students need at least one remedial course in college. Many students do not understand the demands of college until it is too late, and they are already behind, deterring some from postsecondary enrollment (Cooper, 2011; Stern, 2012).

High school graduates who participated in One Year Out study of 2011, revealed that high school courses are too easy, and a lack of academic demands did not prepare them for the demands of college (Stern, 2012). The One Year Out report surveyed 1,500 high school graduates about the ways high school influenced their lives and postsecondary studies. This survey was an attempt to gather information from the students' point of view rather than the administrators or educators. Results of the study revealed 69% of the students found high school course requirements were too easy and students were unprepared for the demands of college (Stern, 2012). Students were not required to take more rigorous courses in high school, and upon reflection, students in the study wished they would have worked harder to prepare for college (Stern, 2012). There has often been a disconnect between high schools and colleges that should be working as partners (Stern, 2012). Results of the One Year Out surveys indicated that 54% of students found first-year college courses to be more challenging than expected (Stern, 2012).

Mettern and Wyatt (2012) and Pretlow and Wathington (2014) used a retrospective data analysis and found that academic rigor or difficulty of high school courses is a predictor for future success and has a more significant impact on completing a bachelor's degree than a student's GPA or standardized test scores. In an effort to increase rigor in primary and secondary schools, many states have adopted the Common

Core Standards that provide a framework detailing what students should know and be able to do (Mettern & Wyatt, 2012). Boser and Rosenthal (2012) believed that the Common Core Standards might have been a step in the right direction, but most teachers report the standards are not much different from the ones they already have.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the number of high school sophomores who wanted to go to college doubled from 40% in 1980 to 80% in 2002 (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). An analysis of Greene and Forster's college readiness measure and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores revealed a consistent gap in the college preparedness and enrollment of students from underprivileged or minority backgrounds even though the college aspirations of these students have augmented drastically (Roderick et al., 2009). Although minority students from various socio-cultural backgrounds have college aspirations, low-SES students often lack the knowledge and guidance needed to pursue postsecondary education (Boser & Rosenthal, 2012; McKillip, Godfrey, & Rawls, 2013). Venezia and Jaeger (2013) found that minority students in disadvantaged school districts did not have counselors who primarily focused on college preparation.

Thousands of secondary and postsecondary institutions devised ways to address the gap and increase college readiness (Roderick et al., 2009). A descriptive study in Massachusetts revealed one issue with many of these programs is a disagreement or no consensus among policymakers and educational leaders about what constitutes college readiness (Roderick et al., 2009). Policymakers and leaders in education are developing new measures for college and career readiness to ensure that high schools graduate students equipped with 21st century skills (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Several

organizations came together to determine what comprises 21st century skills. Twenty-first century skills include English language arts, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, technical skills, career-specific knowledge, college behaviors and habits, and civic knowledge that prepares students to participate in democratic processes (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Determining college readiness requires institutions to decide what knowledge and skills are necessary for students to possess when transitioning to an IHE or entering into a career.

Defining what it means to be college ready is open to interpretation by each secondary and postsecondary institution. College readiness encompasses academic content, cognitive approaches, background knowledge, time-management skills, goal development, self-responsibility, and an understanding of college culture, procedures, and systems (Mechur Karp, 2012). Hooker and Brand (2010) discussed a publication by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYFP) that examined 23 programs meant to support and prepare students for life after high school. The AYPF determined that college and career readiness was more than academic knowledge. Hooker and Brand (2010) used the AYPF's definition for college and career readiness:

Students are prepared to successfully complete credit-bearing college coursework or industry certification without remediation, have the academic skills and self-motivation necessary to persist and progress in postsecondary education, and have identified career goals and the necessary steps to achieve them. Readiness also requires the developmental maturity to thrive in the increasingly independent worlds of postsecondary education and careers, the cultural knowledge to understand the expectations of

the college environment and labor market, and the employer-desired skills to succeed in an innovation-based economy. (p. 76)

Students transitioning to college need an understanding of the admission process, types of degrees available, costs of those degree programs, financial aid options, requirements for college-level courses, and the socio-cultural differences (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Through observations, interviews, and focus groups with school staff and students, McKillip et al. (2013) identified a need for teachers, counselors, and other school staff to work collaboratively to ensure students receive the necessary support to help students build college aspirations. McKillip et al.'s (2013) case study consisted of a small, urban public school serving students in grades 6 through 12. Six teachers were observed, three guidance counselors were interviewed, one teacher focus group was held, and two student focus groups with eighth graders and twelfth graders were held. McKillip et al. (2013) revealed that school staff believed establishing a college-going culture and community of learners was critical to student success, but it required a stronger effort.

Roderick et al. (2009) drew on research conducted by David Conley who identified four areas of college readiness. According to researcher David Conley, college preparedness consists of a student's knowledge of norms, content, and college, along with core academic and non-cognitive skills (Roderick et al., 2009). Non-cognitive skills encompass a student's self-awareness, monitoring, and control, in addition to well-developed study, work, and time management skills (Roderick et al., 2009). Moreover, students need to develop help-seeking and social problem-solving skills to ensure college

readiness (Roderick et al., 2009). Many of the college-readiness characteristics described by Conley require students to be aware of their self-identity, roles, and responsibilities as college students. Developing a college identity can aid high school students in remaining engaged and help them take the necessary steps to enroll in postsecondary institutions (Hooker & Brand, 2010). One program, the Early College High School (ECHS), allows students to learn on a college campus that allows students to adapt and build a college identity (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Any type of accelerated learning opportunity should ensure that students are constructing a college identity.

Students from low-income backgrounds, underrepresented populations, at-risk students, and first-generation college students encounter specific obstacles when applying to and remaining in college (Hooker & Brand, 2010; McKillip et al., 2013). Schools in an urban environment often have a student population that enters high school at least a grade level behind intellectually (McKillip et al., 2013). These students often lack role models at home and in the community who have attended college and can help them develop college knowledge (Hooker & Brand, 2010; McKillip et al., 2013). Many of these students need guidance to choose an institution that meets their needs and aspirations as well as better social and academic preparation (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Hooker and Brand (2010) found that high schools with a strong college presence increased student chances of enrolling in and remaining in college. Effective high school programs allow students to earn dual credit, consist of frequent college exposure, campus visits, a strong support system, and that take place on a college campus (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Secondary schools play a vital role in facilitating a rigorous, college-going culture that increases the access to and retention of students in college. Establishing a college-

going environment requires staff to set high expectations for students, a rigorous curriculum, and individualized attention that allows students to set realistic goals for themselves and the staff helps them develop the necessary skills to reach those goals (McKillip et al., 2013). Dual enrollment courses that occur outside of a college campus may not adequately prepare students for the demands of college (Ozmun, 2013).

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to complete college courses while in high school and earn college credit (Hugo, 2001). Inner city or schools with large, underserved populations often lack access to elective course and other academic opportunities that can improve a student's academic profile (Hugo, 2001). Dual enrollment can supplement the lack of course offerings and increase college preparedness. Increasing minority and underprivileged students' exposure to postsecondary opportunities is at the core of many DEPs (Hugo, 2001; Roderick et al., 2009). Santa Monica College (SMC) allows students to enroll in a variety of courses to peak their interests on the college campus and taught by a college professor (Hugo, 2001). Most course offerings are available to juniors and seniors in high school, but there are some courses open to sophomores (Hugo, 2001). Leaders at SMC believe that college preparedness is more than completing college-level work (Hugo, 2001).

Santa Monica College's DEP includes a one-credit college course called Orientation to Higher Education (OHE). A high school counselor, hired part-time by SMC's counseling department, typically teaches the class (Hugo, 2001). Counselors teaching OHE interact with students daily to establish a firm college foundation for high school students (Hugo, 2001). During OHE students learn more about applying to colleges, prepare resumes, complete mock applications, practice writing college essays,

learn test-taking strategies, explore career options, and better prepare for college admission (Hugo, 2001). Students who successfully complete a DEP at Ohio State University do not receive admission into a degree-granting program unless they meet the requirements and undergo a competitive admission process (OSU Office, 2010). Similar to many IHEs, Ohio State University (OSU) does not guarantee admission into one of their programs upon completion of a DEP. That is one-reason orientation programs similar to SMC's OHE are vital for preparing students for college admission. Dual enrollment courses held on a high school campus and taught by HSAs, need to establish orientation courses similar to SMC's OHE that include authentic college experiences (Carlson, 2013).

In a 2005 survey of high school students in the United States, a high majority of students favored increased and more rigorous graduation standards that might add some challenges to their lives (Matusevich, O'Conner, & Hargett, 2009). Academically challenged students use a broader range of their talents and intellectual abilities in complex academic and authentic tasks (Matusevich et al., 2009). Academic rigor must be relevant and based on established expectations that enable them to master complex and challenging content with the opportunity to learn and use real-world, problem-solving skills (Matusevich et al., 2009). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction developed a rigor rubric that contained three levels of rigor (Matusevich et al., 2009). Secondary and postsecondary institutions can work collaboratively to develop similar rubrics to address academic rigor. Rigor rubrics may prove beneficial for students in specific areas, but a nationalized definition and core for rigor needs established to augment student success.

Postsecondary remediation. According to Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001), students who perform well in high school have increased confidence in their ability to perform well in college (as cited in An, 2013). An increased feeling of confidence may not be enough. Cooper (2011) believed that high school students could be college-ready in some facets and yet still need remedial courses. Unfortunately, more than half of the students entering college after graduating high school unprepared and need of remedial courses (An, 2013). Required, remedial coursework that may earn students credit, but many of those credits do not count toward graduation or degree attainment (Wyatt, Wiley, Camara, & Proestler, 2012).

High school and college learning environments are very different and programs designed to prepare students for college need to design programs that address these differences (Cooper, 2011; Harris & Stovall, 2013). Entry-level college course can reveal students' lack of content knowledge, study habits, organization, time management, and ability to apply what they are taught (Cooper, 2011). Conley (2007) found that college-level courses are often faster paced and require students to engage in higher-order thinking tasks that include making inferences, analyzing, interpreting, and more involved thought about the material (as cited in Wyatt et al., 2012). In high school, course pace is slower, reading skills are underdeveloped, students may not encounter the various writing styles required for college, teachers are available to help and monitor students, and students do not recognize the importance of teamwork and feedback (Cooper, 2011; Smith et al., 2014). Boser and Rosenthal (2012) found, 39% of high school seniors reported that they seldom engage in critical reading and writing activities. Cooper (2011) and Smith et al. (2014) recommended that programs designed to prepare students for

college help students develop cognitive strategies, build a strong foundation of content knowledge and skills, and equip students with the knowledge about postsecondary requirements and behaviors.

Adelman, Daniel, and Berkovits (2003) found that students who experienced a low level of rigor in high school, needed remediation in college. Adelman et al. (2003) divided the academic intensity of high school students' curriculum into quintiles and revealed some startling results. Fifteen percent of students in the highest quintile needed remediation at the postsecondary level followed by 36% in the second quintile, 53% to 54% in the third and fourth, and an overwhelming 67% in the lowest quintile (Adelman et al., 2003). Several studies suggest that even with high schools meeting state standards for graduation, the curricula might not be rigorous enough to prepare students for college success (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Wyatt et al., 2012). Wyatt et al. (2012) found that although more than half of the states in the United States require students to pass some form of a standardized test, many of these tests measure students at an 8th to 10th grade skill level. Surprisingly, studies have shown that 70% of college professors report devoting class time to review content that they believe students should have learned in high school, and they believe that nearly half of the students are unprepared upon entering college (Wyatt et al., 2012).

Dual enrollment benefits students in various ways, including increased high school matriculation and higher grades in college (An, 2013). Dual enrollment programs also bring an element of increased rigor in high schools in the hopes of reducing the need for remediation at the postsecondary level (Lewis & Overman, 2008). Even with the positive benefits revealed by many studies on DE, these studies tend to focus on short-

term influences of dual enrollment on college degree attainment (An, 2013).

Additionally, there is a lack of research distinguishing the benefits between face-to-face and online DEPs.

Current Research on Dual Enrollment

In 2013, every state in the United States offered some form of a DEP to high school students, and although it is not a requirement, many schools have collaborated to provide students with dual enrollment (DE) opportunities (Young, Joyner, & Slate, 2013; Ozmun, 2013). Studies in Florida, Rhode Island, and New York revealed that high school students who completed DEPs were more likely to graduate, pursue higher education, and become full-time college students than students who did not take DE courses (Ashburn, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2010; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009). Studies have shown that college students who completed DEPs while in high school had higher persistence and retention rates than students who did not complete a DEP (Cassidy et al., 2010; Shaughnessy, 2009). Dual enrollment programs offer students numerous benefits, but scarce research on the effectiveness of ODEPs elicits further inquiry (Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Dual enrollment programs began as a way to attract highly motivated students, but became a method for increasing success for low-SES students (Hebert, 2001). Dual enrollment programs are accessible for a vast array of students, unlike programs similar to AP courses that target only gifted or high-achieving students (Hebert, 2001; Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Many U.S. high schools saw an opportunity to use DEPs as an approach to address the achievement gap amid low and high-SES students. Although the impact made by DEPs on closing achievement gaps in degree attainment remains unclear, many

researchers found that DEPs increase higher education opportunities for low-income students (Ashburn, 2007; An, 2013; Hoffman, Vargas, & Santos, 2009). Dual enrollment programs are advantageous for students from any background and in various ways.

Several studies and researchers have debated the benefits of DEPs for high school students. Mokher and McLendon (2009) cited various benefits to DEPs including, the acclimation of students to the social structures of college and better academic preparation. Reisberg (1998) discussed a high school junior who took advantage of enrolling in college courses while in high school. A few weeks after graduating from high school that same student earned his associate of arts degree (Reisberg, 1998). Along with those benefits, students enrolled in DEPs are in a better situation to make knowledgeable choices about their future academic endeavors (Hooker & Brand, 2010; Stern, 2012). Making well-informed choices can help students shorten the time to degree attainment, which can save money (An, 2013; Lewis & Overman, 2008; Mokher & McLendon, 2009). Students with little family influence to continue their education can gain a valuable glimpse into the demands of college life.

As the popularity of DEPs increases, some states enacted policies to promote these programs. Almost every state and numerous school districts offer some form of a DEP with 12 states requiring schools to establish DEPs (Kronholz, 2011). In Texas, for example, high schools are required to offer students with the option of earning at least 12 college credits through some type of accelerated learning program (Hughes, 2010). States may offer accelerated learning opportunities, including DEPs, but there is not a clear separation of dual enrollment and online dual enrollment programs. Marken et al. (2013) found that 53% of institutions throughout the United States had high school

students enrolled in some form of a DEP; including ODEPs. During the 2010 – 2011 school year, institutions revealed that roughly 1,277,100 high school students completed courses for college credit within a DEP and nearly 136,400 outside a DEP (Marken et al., 2013). Current research on DEPs encompasses authentic college experiences, rigor in schools, partnerships between schools, and impediments to dual enrollment.

Authentic college experiences. If there is an increasing need for accelerated learning opportunities like DE, there is an obvious lack of rigor in many secondary institutions (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Learning and developmental theories suggest that the curriculum should be increasingly challenging for students and recalibration may be in order for secondary and postsecondary institutions (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Structurally, the differences between high school and college make the transition very difficult for many students (Harris & Stovall, 2013). High school environments are typically highly structured with a set schedule, teacher assistance, and guided activities (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Academic success in college can depend on what students do in between classes, how well they adhere to their schedules, and their ability to take responsibility for their learning (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). One student described the difference as, “In high school, they kind of eased you into the assignment. Here [in college], they expect you to pay attention and just get it done” (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011, p. 153).

There is much debate about whether DE students should be treated as adults or receive some of the same accommodations they are accustomed to as high school students (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Student maturity levels are a major concern for colleges (Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). The case study conducted by Thelin and Taczak

(2013) and other studies have shown that the immaturity of younger students present in a college classroom interfered with the learning of other students. Thelin and Taczak (2013) conducted a case study and interviewed one student who had participated in a classroom research project five years earlier. Further research is necessary to determine how age and maturity levels affect dual enrollment, specifically in an online environment that requires students to take ownership of their learning (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Mitchell, 2012; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011).

The purpose of a DEP and the definition of an authentic college experience vary greatly. Hebert (2001) disagreed with many researchers and colleges who believed DEPs should provide students with the complete college experience. Instead, Hebert (2001) believed that DEPs should offer academically prepared high school students with college-level content. Hebert's (2001) belief for DEPs focuses on students who are deemed academically prepared and neglects other aspects of what it means to be college ready.

The Ohio State University (OSU) offers dual enrollment programs for high school students that take place on the university's campus, with instruction by university professors (OSU Office, 2010). OSU's belief is that for high school students to succeed in college, they need to participate actively in a program that pinpoints what it means to be college ready and provides sufficient support (OSU Office, 2010). Dual enrollment programs offered by OSU provide students with innovative educational opportunities that combine the university's institutional, pedagogical, and scholarly expertise for students who demonstrate college readiness (OSU Office, 2010).

Early College programs often provide students with courses that are more comprehensive, counseling, and a system for tracking their progress in the program

(Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Critics of DEPs and ODEPs question how these programs are adequately preparing students for postsecondary instruction when they lack several college components. Some researchers believe that a physical presence on a college campus is enough to motivate students, particularly those who have not established a college identity (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Mechur Karp (2012) emphasized the need for DE students to engage in all aspects of the college role to better prepare for college success. It is important for students to obtain the necessary skills to complete the many demands of college-level work while acquiring the components of successful college students (Mechur Karp, 2012).

Dual enrollment programs can benefit students, but unfortunately, DEPs and student experiences within them vary immensely (Whissemore, 2012). Educational leaders suggested that high schools increase their knowledge of students who choose to enroll in a DEP, reasons for enrolling, educational prospects, and how high-stakes policies may affect DEPs that occur in a high school (Whissemore, 2012). The purpose of Ohio's DEPs is to provide high school students with authentic college experiences. Ohio endorses DEPs located on a college campus, but there is no restriction against DEPs located in other settings (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Various IHEs hold similar sentiments of effective DEPs occurring on a college campus, with college professors, and with college students in the room to provide students with transitional benefits (Reisberg, 1998; Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). Without a widely accepted definition of an effective DEP, experiences and content will continue to vary offering some students with a lack-luster experience.

Secondary and postsecondary partnerships. Dual enrollment programs provide secondary and postsecondary institutions a unique opportunity to collaborate for student achievement. Successful implementation of DEPs requires collaboration between high schools, colleges, program directors, funding departments, counselors, administrators, faculty, and parents to ensure that students have the support needed to benefit from DEPs (Cassidy et al., 2010; Ozmun, 2013). Some DE courses consist of all high school students, many occur on the high school campus, and sometimes college faculty are unaware of when DE students are present in their class (Hughes, 2010). Hughes (2010) found that some college professors are interested and eager to teach high school students participating in DEPs. Educational leaders recommend that for best results, college professors have some sort of experience teaching in a high school and a passion for working with younger students (Hughes, 2010). Professors who lack teaching experience with younger students can reciprocate ideas with high school faculty to support learning for students.

Communication and collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions is vital for an effective partnership (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Howley et al. (2013) found that different goals for education and definitions of academic rigor create communication gaps and miscommunication that often lead to failures in the functionality of dual enrollment provisions. Some high school teachers were uninformed about university or college policies, and as a result, they believed their DE students were at a disadvantage (Howley et al., 2013). Conflicting schedules between partnering institutions and teachers make it difficult to discuss how they will co-teach and assist learners.

Virginia established a consortium of institutions that frequently communicate and collaborate (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). The design and implementation of DEPs in the consortium revolve around a network of professionals who work together to reduce the need of remedial college course and increase college access for underserved student populations (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Faculty members involved in the consortium meet weekly and explore innovative strategies to increase student accountability (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Scheduling for a meeting is easier for members of the consortium because a grant allows substitute teachers to cover their classes during meeting times (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Many K12 school districts do not have the funding or scheduling available to allow such frequent meetings that occur across grade levels (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Success of dual enrollment depends on the communication between collaborating institutions, the willingness of educators to work together rather than compete, increasing community awareness, and developing long-term funding plans (Howley et al., 2013).

Dual enrollment programs are flexible by nature and provide schools with a variety of options (Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). Programs can occur during or outside regular school hours, by high school or college educators, and on high school or college campuses (Hebert, 2001). During the 2010 – 2011 school year, institutions reported that 83% of DEPs occur on a college campus, 64% on a high school campus, and 48% through a form of distance education, with many institutions offering several options (Marken et al., 2013). Of the courses held on a high school campus, high school adjuncts taught 34% of the courses (Marken et al., 2013). High school teachers who taught DEPs received training and held the minimum qualifications for a college instructor (Marken et

al., 2013). Discounted tuition rates are available for most high school students enrolled in DEPs to encourage participation. Marken et al. (2013) found that postsecondary institutions pay 77% of the tuition costs, students and parents pay 66%, high schools and their districts pay 44%, states pay 38%, and additional sources pay for 10% of DEP costs.

High school DE teachers are controversial for postsecondary institutions even though many of these teachers meet the standards to qualify as adjunct professors (Hebert, 2001; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Although numerous researchers have found positive outcomes with adjunct faculty, they have yet to explore sufficiently high school teachers as adjuncts (Hebert, 2001). What high school adjunct considered important was trivial to many college professors; such as paperwork, deadlines, and schedules (Howley et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Hebert (2001), the learning outcomes for students taught by a high school adjunct were superior to those who were not. High school adjunct that teach courses on a HS campus may be at an advantage over college faculty teaching DEPs (Hebert, 2001). College faculty who travelled to teach on the HS campus often had less time with students, as mandated by the college, and they were not acclimated to the HS campus culture (Hebert, 2001). Students taught by HS adjunct received almost double the instruction time of a typical three hours per week college course (Hebert, 2001).

College faculty may feel as though they are stuck with a less prestigious job of teaching a DE course and resent the schedule accommodations DE courses require (Hebert, 2001). High school adjunct may be excited to have their skills identified, and the opportunity to teach college-level courses (Hebert, 2001). Although a majority of college faculty are required to have a master's degree or higher and are experts in their

field, HS teachers often possess higher degrees in education that give them an advantage with applying diverse learning and teaching styles (Hebert, 2001). High school adjuncts may possess a certain level of skills, particularly in teaching methodology, but there is some debate about whether those methodologies will prepare students adequately for college (Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). Colleges expect high school students to adapt to the rigors of college while high school administrators believe that students should continue to receive instruction similar to that which they are accustomed (Wozniak & Palmer, 2013).

Lake City Community College (LCCC) in Florida was originally a school of forestry in 1947 (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Since that time, LCCC evolved into a comprehensive community college serving five counties in North Central Florida (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). As K12 schools began reducing class size, dropping honors and vocational programs, and became challenged to engage students, a DE partnership with LCCC increased enrollment for LCCC and surrounding K12 school districts (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Public and private, including homeschooled, students enrolled in a DEP with LCCC receive a waiver for the cost of fees, books, and tuition (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). The surrounding LCCC is rural and serves many underrepresented students (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). To attract and encourage students to enroll in DEPs, LCCC developed several options (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Students can take DE courses on the high school campus, receive instruction from dually hired professors, and attend courses at various times before, during, or after the school day, with some courses available online or through videoconferencing (Hunt & Carroll, 2006).

The Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESCCO) coordinates DE partnerships between central Ohio school districts and postsecondary institutions

(ESCCO, n.d.c). Dual enrollment is a manner to reduce higher education costs, promote college enrollment, meet the needs of diverse student populations, increase rigor for high school students, and provide additional professional development opportunities for high school teachers (ESCCO, n.d.c). Since 2006, the ESCCO has facilitated DE partnerships through a grant funded by the Ohio Core (ESCCO, n.d.c). In January 2010, approximately 70% of the 25 school districts served by ESCCO offered some form of a DEP with high school students earning more than \$3.4 million worth of college credits (ESCCO, n.d.c). Despite the fact that funding from the grant has depleted, the ESCCO continues to work with, strengthen, and grow the partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions (ESCCO, n.d.c). Several postsecondary institutions continue to build partnerships with secondary institutions despite a lack of funding because increasing student preparedness can decrease the total time, money, and resources spent to prepare students who enter college in need of remedial courses.

In Ohio, like many other states, there are no clear entry requirements for students who want to enroll in DEPs (ESCCO, n.d.a). Students need to enroll in an approved DE program, apply for admission to the partnering postsecondary institution, and some of those institutions require a minimum GPA or test scores (ESCCO, n.d.a). Programs vary by the type of secondary and postsecondary partnership, but every DE course should consist of a college-level curriculum, syllabus, instructional techniques, and assessment (ESCCO, n.d.a). Although partnering colleges expect these elements to be present, several ODEPs are lacking them.

Online dual enrollment programs taught by high school teachers occur during normal school hours for students and instruction may vary. The techniques employed by

a high school teacher and a college professor differ greatly and may lead to students receiving more assistance and accommodations in a high school than in an authentic college setting (Reisberg, 1998; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Several contextual, cultural, and structural differences exist between high schools and IHEs (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). High school classes are subject to student absences, frequent interruptions, and even cancellations for school activities (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). High school teachers require flexibility to meet the demands of their environment. College students have the option to drop courses that they are failing, and many high school students do not have that option (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Failing grades can negatively affect high school teachers who are often required to accept absent or late work, but the same is not always true for college faculty (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011).

Current Research on ODEPs

Online dual enrollment programs are a form of distance learning. Distance learning provides educational opportunities to individuals around the world and incorporates a variety of technologies. Distance education programs provide educators and learners with equal opportunities, flexibility, and access to multidisciplinary areas of study (Sheeja, 2011). According to Gutierrez (2010), distance learning has become popular throughout the world to meet the needs of students who require flexibility. Distance learning is accessible, cost-efficient, flexible, and opens learning up to people who may not have had an opportunity to attend a brick and mortar school (Beldarrain, 2006; Harris & Stovall, 2013). Sheeja (2011) revealed that distance learning increases access to learning, provides higher quality resources, centers on the learner, and enables learners to overcome some of the social or cultural barriers they may have experienced.

Some researchers argue that distance education is more closely monitored and scrutinized, but others argue that the quality of research and scholarship needs to improve (Davies, Howell, & Petrie, 2010).

DiRienzo and Lilly (2014) conducted a study, using surveys, with online learners and traditional face-to-face learners. These researchers found no significant difference in student learning through course delivery method. Yet other studies have revealed that students in an online environment performed poorer than those who received face-to-face instruction (DiRienzo & Lilly 2014). The study conducted by DiRienzo and Lilly (2014) focused on adult learners who have different levels of readiness and motivation that younger learners may lack. Although their study revealed no significant difference in learning, the results did reveal that learners in a face-to-face environment exert more effort. That level of effort is needed from students who lack motivation, battle senioritis, and are unfamiliar with the rigors of college-level coursework (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). Educators are tasked with working collaboratively and developing professionally to provide effective instruction to students in an online environment.

Teachers in an online learning environment lack the physical interaction and nonverbal cues associated with teaching in a traditional learning environment. Teaching in an online dual enrollment program requires teachers and students to possess effective communication skills. Teachers need ample knowledge about individual students to address their needs and learning preferences (Mehrotra, 2004). This may be more difficult in a distance learning setting and require more work for the instructor. Mehrotra (2004) believed that teachers should know their students before the course begins in order

to identify their learning styles to assess them better. The tone or words a teacher chooses to use in an ODEP are open to misinterpretation.

Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBA) is a private school located in Florida. Because of a declining economy, high unemployment rates, and decreased enrollment, many private universities began seeking opportunities to increase enrollment (Enyart, 2011). Online Dual Enrollment Programs (ODEPs) allowed universities like PBA to increase enrollment by enrolling high school students and students from around the world. High school students enrolling in these programs can enter college with as few as three to 45 college credit hours (Enyart, 2011). In addition to college credits, high school students enrolled in ODEPs will experience various aspects of college life even without stepping foot on a campus. Students in ODEPs often receive a student identification number, access to the online library, and a college e-mail address while developing a sense of community through e-learning (Enyart, 2011).

Online dual enrollment programs differ by school and may incorporate the Internet or videoconferencing (Sheeja, 2011). A majority of ODEPs occur on the student's high school campus, during the normal school hours, and high school adjuncts typically work together with college faculty (Howley et al., 2013; Hunt & Carroll, 2006; Marken et al., 2013; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). According to Hebert (2001) and Reisberg (1998), many DE leaders thought it would be more attractive for high school students to complete their courses on a high school campus. Courses on a student's high school campus eliminate transportation costs for DEPs and enable him or her to learn in a familiar and comfortable environment (Hebert, 2001). Several of Ohio's ODEPs employ high school teachers as high school adjuncts to facilitate these college-level courses on

the high school campus and during the normal school day (ESCCO, n.d.b). High school teachers must apply as adjuncts with the partnering postsecondary institution and work collaboratively with that institution to deliver college-level material (ESCCO, n.d.b). Students who complete an ODEP receive transcribed college and high school credit (ESCCO, n.d.b). Concerns remain about the ability of these ODEPs to prepare students for postsecondary education.

ODEPs in Ohio. The Ohio Core mandated that the Ohio Partnership for Continued Learning (OPCL) increase opportunities for high school students to earn college credit and expand DEPs that take place in the comforts of their high school campus (OPCL, 2008). Ohio has several accelerated learning programs consisting of AP, IB, Tech Prep, PSEO, and Early College High Schools (OPCL, 2008). In 2008, the State of Ohio established the Seniors to Sophomores program that allowed high school seniors to earn their diplomas, and one year of college credit simultaneously (Cassidy et al., 2010). The Seniors to Sophomores initiative is just one example of states trying to increase the rigor for students and encourage them to continue learning. One issue with Ohio's Seniors to Sophomores program is that it was not feasible for students to spend the entire school day of their senior year on a college campus. Some students encountered transportation issues, others did not want to miss senior year activities, and schools did not want to lose funding for participating students (Cassidy et al., 2010). These issues led to an increased use of ODEPs.

Secondary schools offering DEPs are required to offer students and parents with counseling services to ensure they understand the roles and responsibilities of participating in DEP (Jordan, 2001). Parents cannot discuss their child's academic

progress with the partnering college professor (Jordan, 2001). Lessening the parental involvement helps students assume responsibility for their learning and perform at the same level as other college students (Jordan, 2001). Columbus State Community College (CSCC) in Ohio requires parents and students to attend a mandatory orientation meeting once they accepted into the PSEO program (Jordan, 2001). Students and parents had to sign an agreement stating that they understand the requirements, policies, and consequences of PSEO (Jordan, 2001). CSCC holds a majority of PSEO courses on the college campus, but they do have options available on the high school campus taught by CSCC faculty (Jordan, 2001).

In Ohio, the ODEP came in the form of the PSEO for students in grades nine through 12. Similar to Ohio, Minnesota's PSEO program collaborated with 65 public, private, technical, community, and extension campuses (Kronholz, 2011). Students in grades nine through 12 are eligible to enroll in Ohio's PSEO (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). The Ohio Department of Education (2008) believed that the purpose of PSEO programs is to offer high school students additional education opportunities that are more enriching than those offered by their high school. Students in Ohio have the option to earn simultaneously high school and college credit free of charge under Ohio's PSEO (Ohio Education Matters, 2009; OPCL, 2008). DE courses are free of charge unless a student fails the course, which encourages student participation and achievement.

Ideally, students who enroll in PSEO are more likely to attend college after graduating high school, results of the studies confirming that may be flawed (Ohio Education Matters, 2009). PSEO is Ohio's only DE policy, and it does not include a state

level plan that leads to inconsistent implementation (OPCL, 2008). Although enrollments in ODEPs continue to rise, the OPCL (2008) found that awareness and availability of PSEO in Ohio is lacking with a mere 1.8% of students participating in comparison to 10% to 30% in other states offering PSEO. Similar to many other states, Ohio does not have a long-term, longitudinal data system in place that tracks and measures student success from high school into college; leaving researchers with little accurate data about the benefits of DEPs (OPCL, 2008). Other factors, besides PSEO, may be contributing to the enrollment and success of these students in postsecondary education. Ohio's PSEO has the potential to serve as an effective model for early college access, but policymakers need to understand and address the limitations.

Impediments to Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment programs do not come without limitations and hurdles. States that have DE policies remain unregulated, and institutions have much freedom in determining how these programs operate. A lack of regulations and defined goals for dual enrollment programs increase some of the impediments these programs continue to encounter. The level of rigor and the funding required for effective DEPs is a cause for concern for many advocates and critics of DE (Lewis & Overman, 2008). Lewis and Overman (2008) questioned how qualified high school adjuncts can teach, and consider a DE course a college course, if they adjust the course to accommodate students. Some schools believe that it does no good to admit students who cannot meet the rigorous demands of college courses, and it raises the concern that schools are altering the curriculum to appeal to underrepresented groups (Lewis & Overman, 2008). Funding,

access, quality concerns, and transferability of transcribed credits are three of the major issues encountered by institutions involved in DEPs.

Funding. Nearly half of the 50 states offer comprehensive DEPs that allow students to earn high school and college credit while the state subsidizes the tuition costs (Hebert, 2001). In 2008, the Higher Education Opportunities Act passed, and that allowed access to non-loan based funding for students and permitted programs like dual enrollment (Grigal, Dwyre, Emmett, & Emmett, 2012). Grants fund several DEPs to serve underprivileged students but also students with disabilities (Grigal et al., 2012). Ohio has two PSEO options. PSEO Option A requires the participants or their parents to pay for all of the costs associated with PSEO and students have the option of only receiving college credit rather than dual credit (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Under PSEO Option B, students receive dual credit, the public school district assumes responsibility for the costs, and students are only responsible for the cost of the course if they receive a failing grade (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). The superintendent or chief administrator from the student's district will seek reimbursement for the amount paid to the participating college in the event that a student fails and grades may be withheld until the amount is paid (Ohio Department of Education, 2008). Requiring students and families to assume some sort of financial responsibility ensures that students do not take DE courses for granted.

Access and resources. Although many school districts provide free DEPs, some schools do not have the technology needed to access materials. Students in rural areas have also had trouble accessing DE courses because of costs and distance from campus (Harris & Stovall, 2013). Several school districts encountering teacher shortages in

certain subject areas and offering students the rigorous course load demanded by various leaders in education, becomes extremely difficult for these districts (Harris & Stovall, 2013). Online dual enrollment programs have given students in even the most remote areas access to dual credit programs, provided that they have the resources available.

Pretlow and Wathington (2014) found that dual enrollment courses, including ODEPs, continue to be low for many minority groups. Often, this is attributed to a lack of resources in the area (Harris & Stovall, 2013). In addition to limited access to resources, some low-achieving students do not have the same opportunities as their counterparts. The mathematics ODEP discussed in the Harris and Stovall (2013) article revealed that certain districts want students to have completed college entrance exams successfully before enrolling in an ODEP. Requiring students to pass a college entrance exam prior to enrolling in an ODEP could potentially deter low-performing students from enrolling in ODEPs. With school districts trying to attract students that they already deemed college-ready to their DEPs, many of the benefits for low-performing students fade. These issues lead to continuous debate and quality concerns.

Quality concerns. Dual enrollment programs vary in where and how students receive instruction (Young, Joyner, & Slate, 2013). According to Whissemore (2012), the effectiveness of a DEP depends on the location and rigor applied to the curriculum. Various leaders at select colleges believe that DE students are skipping entry-level classes and enrolling in advanced classes without the preparation and skills needed to succeed (Reisberg, 1998). Students are attracted to DE opportunities because they vary in quality and rigor, are less expensive, do not require a test to receive credit, and DEPs are offered in low-income areas where AP courses are unavailable (Reisberg, 1998).

Students often find DE courses easier because they do not follow the national, rigorous guidelines for programs like AP courses (Reisberg, 1998). This is one reason colleges and universities have concerns about accepting DE credits (Reisberg, 1998). Leaders in a number of IHEs strongly believe that the rigor in courses offered by many community colleges is not as rigorous as a general education course at a four-year institution (Reisberg, 1998). That belief raised many quality concerns for DEPs and ODEPs.

A survey and literature review conducted by Ozmun (2013) exposed a need to develop a national consensus about what elements are necessary to make the transition into postsecondary education smoother and provide a core for effective ODEPs. Ozmun (2013) wanted to understand students' level of college and academic self-efficacy prior to enrolling in a DEP. Participants included 114 juniors and seniors from eight high schools in Texas and participated in an on-campus DEP (Ozmun, 2013). Students completed an online survey and nearly 74% of students indicated that they were not influenced by anyone, other than themselves, to enroll in a DEP (Ozmun, 2013).

Leaders in a number of IHEs strongly believe that the rigor in courses offered by many community colleges is not as rigorous as a general education course at a four-year institution (Reisberg, 1998). That belief raised many quality concerns for DEPs and ODEPs. Although high school adjuncts meet the same certification standards as college adjuncts or professors, many argue that a DE course taught in a high school and by a high adjunct cannot be a genuine college course (Hughes, 2010). Numerous college faculty and leaders hold several negative perceptions and criticisms of DEPs, primarily aimed at ODEPs. Universities are not trying to discourage DEPs, but they want to ensure that the

coursework is on par with university standards, so students are prepared to handle the workload successfully (Reisberg, 1998).

Kronholz (2011) found that many DEPs take place on a high school campus, with some programs online, and are taught by a high school teacher who received training. College courses held on a high school campus and taught by high school adjunct create a backlash toward DEPs from public and private IHE. In fact, Georgia and Wisconsin require instruction for DEPs to occur on a college campus (Kronholz, 2011). Dual enrollment programs are supposed to deliver the same rigorous college content including the syllabus, instruction type, resources, and assessments (Hughes, 2010; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Students in DEPs should also be held to the same standards and expectations as other college students (Hughes, 2010; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Provided with the same rigorous content, DE students may still receive extra support or scaffolding, and instruction delivered using pedagogical strategies aimed at engaging high school students (Hughes, 2010). Establishing firm partnerships increase student chances for transferability of transcribed credit.

Some colleges are hesitant to accept DE credits because of the unknown factors associated with the programs. Many DEPs lack a standard method for calculating and weighting dual credits into a student's GPA, and staff turnover rates poorly affect the stability of DE partnerships (Harris & Stovall, 2013). Lafayette College's director of admissions, Gary Ripple, believed, "a college-level course should be offered on a college campus, taught by a college professor, with college students in the room. That's the fundamental reason we do not recognize some of these gypsy courses" (Reisberg, 1998, p. A40). Not unlike the sentiments of director Gary Ripple, many leaders in education

question the consistency and rigor of Ohio's PSEO that affects the transferability of transcribed credits (OPCL, 2008). Changes to DEPs that define college readiness, establish national goals for DEPs, and strengthen the partnership between secondary and postsecondary institutions will relieve DEPs of some of the negative connotations.

Transferability. A mere 15 states require public universities to accept transfer credits from a DEP (Kronholz, 2011). Unfortunately, the quality of instruction for DEPs held at high schools or community colleges is difficult to determine, and credits do not transfer easily (Kronholz, 2011). Students are attracted to DE opportunities because they vary in quality and rigor, are less expensive, do not require a test to receive credit, and DEPs are offered in low-income areas where AP courses are sometimes unavailable (Reisberg, 1998). Students often find DE courses easier because they do not follow the national, rigorous guidelines for programs like AP courses (Reisberg, 1998). International Baccalaureate and AP courses contain rigorous, college-level content and transcribed credit is based solely on the score students receive on an end-of-course examination (Hughes, 2010). A lack of rigorous guidelines is one reason some colleges are hesitant to accept DE credits over other accelerated learning credits.

In 1979, Florida developed the Accelerated Mechanism Program, a form of DE, to help students reduce the time it takes to earn a college degree and to increase the scope and depth of high school studies (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Numerous policymakers and parents found it to be a viable option because DEPs addressed many of the concerns about the quality of high school curriculum and the cost of postsecondary studies (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Although Florida's DEP and partnership with LCCC are attractive to many students and parents, they continue to encounter many of the challenges other

programs run into with the attitude of universities and their unwillingness to accept DE credits (Hunt & Carroll, 2006).

The ability to transfer credits is one of the biggest hurdles for many DEPs (Hebert, 2001; Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). No law or policy requires postsecondary institutions to accept any type of transfer credit and no school can guarantee that credits will transfer (Hebert, 2001). Colleges that collaborate with high schools are likely to accept dual enrollment credits from students who later attend their college (Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). Some colleges are hesitant to accept DE credits because of the unknown factors associated with the programs. Many of these institutions with similar sentiments are proponents of accelerated learning opportunities, but they reject DE credits taught by high school teachers and apart from the college campus (Hebert, 2001). If students enrolled in DEPs cannot transfer their credits to a postsecondary institution or are required to retake the same course that they took during high school, they miss the benefits of DE (Hebert, 2001). Transferability of DE courses in Ohio is an issue and perhaps confusing for some students and parents. According to the ESCCO (n.d.a) any course approved by the Ohio Board of Regents will transfer to any public college, but private and out of state colleges are not required to accept the credit. Ohio is one of the few states to guarantee any type of transferability of transcribed credit.

Conclusion

As the popularity of DE increases, some states enacted policies to promote these programs and offer suggestions for effective programs. Mettern and Wyatt (2012) found that academic rigor or difficulty of high school courses is a predictor for future success and has a more significant impact on completing a bachelor's degree than a student's

GPA or standardized test scores. Dual enrollment programs vary in where and how students receive instruction. According to Whissemore (2012), the effectiveness of a DEP depends on the location and rigor applied to the curriculum. Partnerships between faculty in secondary and postsecondary institutions need to occur for an effective DEP. Some DE courses consist of all high school students, many occur on the high school campus, and sometimes college faculty are unaware of when DE students are present in their class (Hughes, 2010). Hughes (2010) found that some college professors are interested and eager to teach high school students participating in DEPs. Provided with the same rigorous content, DE students may still receive extra support or scaffolding, and instruction delivered using pedagogical strategies aimed at engaging high school students (Hughes, 2010).

Although the depth and in what form interventions occur is debated, Tinberg and Nadeau (2011) found that successful DEPs require some sort of student intervention. The idea behind student intervention is not to coddle students, but to provide students at different developmental levels with the support needed to become college ready (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Students enrolled in the DEP at Broward Community College have a mandatory check-in with a counselor, and although student schedules are not as rigid as traditional high school schedules, there is more structure than a college schedule (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Successful DE programs assess student learning, provide the necessary scaffolding to help students meet expectations, offer academic rigor with support and intervention, and establish times for faculty to collaborate and discuss the goals of the program (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011).

Ohio Education Matters (2009) discussed Colorado's Growth Model that goes beyond using state assessment scores and examine how much students learn each year so that they can better determine ways to prepare students better for college. The design of dual enrollment programs is to meet the transitional needs of students (Grigal et al., 2012). Grigal et al. (2012) believed that schools collaborating in DEPs need to work together to develop a tool to evaluate their programs. Consistent evaluation is vital to ensure that DEPs are equipping students with the intended outcomes. Evaluation needs to be ongoing to ensure that students are transitioning effectively and that the DEPs are meeting their goals (Grigal et al., 2012). Grigal et al. (2012) discussed one such evaluation tool developed by the Postsecondary Education Research Center (PERC). The PERC Postsecondary Program Evaluation Tool: A Self-Assessment for College and Community-Based Services provides DEPs with an instrument to evaluate their programs with students with intellectual disabilities (Grigal et al., 2012). Developing similar tools is necessary after determining what both secondary and postsecondary institutions want students to know and be able to do.

The OPCL (2008) recommended that several legislative changes take place in Ohio to strengthen PSEO. Educational leaders and legislators need a plan that includes consistent transferability of transcribed credits. Leaders who establish ODEPs need to ensure that DE faculty meet the Higher Learning Commission's qualifications, uphold college-level rigor, and provide students with authentic college classroom experiences (OPCL, 2008). This may mean that ODEP faculty adhere to a more traditional college schedule and not provide students with extended time or additional assistance on assignments. An ODEP team and educational leaders should continually evaluate student

progress while reviewing DE policies at least every other year to ensure that the program is meeting or exceeding goals (OPCL, 2008). The OPCL (2008) further established minimum goals that DEPs should meet; increased participation by diverse student populations, increased college enrollment, retention, and completion rates as well as decreased degree attainment.

Summary

Chapter 2 included a review of the literature that encompasses the history of dual enrollment, conceptual framework, current findings, college readiness research, ODEPs in Ohio, and challenges with ODEPs. Theories and concepts of life course, anticipatory socialization, motivation, self-determination, student involvement, and persistence provide a conceptual framework for this study. Putney and Morris (2011) believed that cultures are rooted in a shared belief system. High schools serving students with these shared, sometimes negative, beliefs can help students by preparing them for success at the college level. Students who receive support from teachers, family, community, counselors, and a rigorous curriculum can help foster success for urban youth (Medvide & Blustein, 2010). Research on DEPs revealed that these programs boosted confidence, influenced career decisions, changed students' perceptions of college, and increased their organizational skills.

Students need the motivation required to compete in a global workforce that entails more than a sense of entitlement (Miller & Slocombe, 2012). Secondary institutions are tasked with motivating students to attain postsecondary studies and postsecondary institutions need to motivate students to strive for future success. Students who complete an ODEP are not experiencing the involvement and interaction with others

in an IHE. Although students will have opportunities to interact and become involved once attending an IHE, inadequate exposure to various elements of college life may deter some students from pursuing higher education.

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. This study extends the literature on dual enrollment programs throughout thousands of schools in the United States. A gap in the research reveals that students enrolled in online dual enrollment programs may not reap the same benefits as students enrolled in traditional, on campus dual enrollment programs. There are many misconceptions and unknowns about online learning programs, and this study will reveal the benefits or problems associated with online dual enrollment programs from the students' perspectives.

Legislators find DEPs attractive because they strengthen the alignment between K12 schools and postsecondary institutions to create a smoother transition for students (Hunt & Carroll, 2006). Educational leaders and policymakers at the national, state, and local levels continue to advocate for the crusade to increase academic rigor and college preparedness for students (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Understanding the results of this study and others can provide educational leaders with a framework for establishing more effective and consistent online dual enrollment programs. Developing more effective ODEPs ensure that students enrolled are receiving benefits equal to their peers enrolled in traditional DEPs.

Chapter 2 presented a review of the research literature on ODEPs in the United States. Findings from literature review analyses, surveys, case studies, and other studies

using longitudinal data, provided critical information about DEPs and ODEPs, but few researchers took an in-depth look into the effectiveness of ODEPs from a student's perspective. The background information, research question, and literature review presented in Chapter 2 provide a foundation for the study's method and design. Chapter 3 contains a detailed discussion of the researcher's decision for selecting a qualitative method over a quantitative method. Chapter 3 includes the appropriateness of the chosen design to answer the research question, a discussion of the population, sample, data collection, and data analysis. The measures taken to increase credibility and transferability are also outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Method

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. Participants included 8 college students who were graduated from a large, urban school district in central Ohio and were enrolled in an institution of higher education. Students described their lived experiences in an ODEP and in what ways, if any, ODEPs contributed to their preparedness for postsecondary education. The study focused on one research question to explore students' decisions to enroll in an ODEP, experiences with an ODEP, and perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to or hindered college preparedness. Chapter 3 elaborates the study's method, design, research question, population, and sampling frame introduced in Chapter 1. The chapter includes the informed consent, confidentiality, geographic location, data collection procedures instrumentation, credibility, transferability, and data analysis.

Research Method and Design Appropriateness

Qualitative research is concerned with quality of findings and not with quantity of data. Data is usually in the form of words rather than numbers and provide readers with well-grounded, rich descriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data is often longer and more detailed than quantitative data that is easily presented in succinct summaries (Patton, 2002). Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research allows the researcher to delve into a particular phenomenon and provide readers with an in-depth description of the study findings (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010; Leedy &

Ormrod, 2009). Quantitative methods often do not address why or for what purpose a phenomenon is occurring (Ishiyama & Breuning, 2011).

Qualitative method. Using a qualitative method was appropriate for the purpose of this study. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. A qualitative method is appropriate for research that does not seek numerical data or largely generalizable results (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010). Qualitative research is appropriate for studying situations that reflect the lives of individuals, groups, and organizations. The focus of this study was on 8 college students who completed at least one ODEP while in high school. This study used a qualitative method to extend current studies on DEPs, to include ODEPs, student experiences, and perceptions of how ODEPs are preparing these students for higher education.

Qualitative researchers attempt to gain and present a holistic view of the situation studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative researchers have an interest in the way people make sense of and interpret their experiences (Merriam, 1988). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is subjective, seeks to understand complexity, refrains from cause and effect, leans toward personal interpretation, and approaches the phenomena holistically (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research may include hypotheses that surface or evolve as data collection ensues (Suter, 2012). This research method is fluid, and with little information on the impact of ODEPs on student preparedness, unexpected findings may arise.

Phenomenological design. Hammond, Howarth, and Keat (1991) defined phenomenology as the study of a phenomenon that allows something to appear to or be perceived by an individual. Researchers using phenomenology to explore a phenomenon identify the problem, formulate the question, generate data, and analyze that data (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is free from prejudgments and biases known as Epoche (Hammond et al., 1991; Moustakas, 1994). Epoche does not eliminate or deny everything, but it doubts scientific facts and preconceived ideas (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher for this study used Epoche prior to data collection and analysis.

Phenomenological researchers focus on description and are often motivated by previously ignored research (Hammond et al., 1991). There is no formula to use when employing phenomenology, but individuals' consciousness is something that creates meaning as they experience the world (Psathas, 1989; Von Eckartsberg, 1986). Phenomenologists explore how individuals experience the world and want to understand human behavior from the individual's perception (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Asking an individual to remember a photo is not the type of remembering that occurs in phenomenology, but remembering requires reflection that encompasses sights, sounds, and feelings an individual incurs while recalling an experience (Hammond et al., 1991; Sokolowski, 2000). Using a phenomenological approach in education has the possibility to move researchers into new directions and clarify perceptions, practices, or notions about a phenomenon (Stanage, 1987). This design enables researchers to obtain an intimate view of people, organizations, events, programs, and relationships from the perception of the people who lived them (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

Phenomenology was appropriate for the purpose of this study and provided a design capable of answering the research question. Other designs, such as ethnography and grounded theory, were not appropriate for this study. Ethnography focuses on the customs of people and requires extensive fieldwork, often with the researcher as a participant (Moustakas, 1994). Grounded theory designs focus on an experience that allows the researcher to develop a theory about the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological studies are descriptive and reveal how others experience the world (Hammersley, 2004; Seamon). Researchers employing phenomenology do not try to explain why individuals experience the world in the way they do nor do they try to validate those experiences as true or false (Hammersley, 2004).

There are three types of phenomenology consisting of hermeneutic, empirical, or transcendental (Adams & Manen, 2008). Transcendental phenomenology is rooted in the works of Edmund Husserl with a focus on intentionality or consciousness, intuition, constructing meaning, and the essence of knowledge (Adams & Manen, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). Using transcendental phenomenology allows the researcher to go beyond what is present and uncover hidden meanings (Moustakas, 1994). Establishing Epoche, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation are essential in transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental-phenomenological reduction leads individuals back to the source of a meaning or experience and during imaginative variation, the essences of the experience are uncovered (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental-phenomenology was appropriate for this study which sought to uncover the perceptions and lived experiences of the students who completed ODEPs.

A phenomenological approach involves first-person depictions of life experiences that allows researchers to develop a comprehensive description to portray the essences or meanings of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). In a phenomenological study, the students' perceptions are the primary source of knowledge and cannot be doubted (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews, with open-ended questions and dialogue, enable the researcher to describe the experience and interpret the participant's story (Moustakas, 1994). In-depth interviews provided this study data relevant to the research question.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. The study focused on one research question to explore students' experiences with an ODEP, and their perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to or hindered college preparedness. Exploring the lived experiences, views, and perceptions of students who completed an ODEP in high school and transitioned into higher education, provided a framework to explore the student preparedness phenomenon. A gap in the research revealed that students enrolled in online dual enrollment programs may not reap the same benefits as students enrolled in traditional, face-to-face dual enrollment programs (Cassidy et al., 2010; Mead, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). Providing an answer to the research question could reveal that ODEPs provide students with a false sense of college preparedness and an experience lacking the benefits to studying on a college campus. The research question guided this qualitative, phenomenological study:

RQ1: How do college students, who completed an online dual enrollment program while in high school, perceive the impact that the ODEP had on preparation for college?

Population

The general population for this study consisted of the two million high school students enrolled in dual enrollment programs throughout the United States; including ODEPs (Marken et al., 2013). The target population was composed of the more than 1000 high school students who enroll and complete ODEPs each year in the state of Ohio (Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, 2013). The specific population consisted of the Ohio college students who met the study's participant criteria. The participants included first year college students and students who had been enrolled in an IHE for more than a year. The study's participant criteria included students who enrolled in and completed at least one ODE course while in high school, maintained a cumulative high school grade point average of 2.5 or higher, and currently attend a four-year college in Ohio. Students enrolled in online colleges or universities did not qualify for this study.

Sampling Frame

Each state has its own DEP, but Ohio is one of the few states with a DE policy requiring high schools to expand programs that enable students to earn college credit on their high school campus (OPCL, 2008). In Ohio, the ODEP came in the form of the PSEO for students in grades nine through 12. The Ohio Department of Education (2008) believed that the purpose of PSEO programs is to offer high school students additional education opportunities that are more enriching than those offered by their high school. Students in Ohio have the option to earn high school and college credit simultaneously

and free of charge under Ohio's PSEO (Ohio Education Matters, 2009; OPCL, 2008). PSEO is Ohio's only DE policy, and it does not include a state level plan that leads to inconsistent implementation (OPCL, 2008). A large, urban school district in central Ohio that represented a cross-section of urban school districts throughout Ohio compiled the sample. Participants met the criteria established by the researcher.

A sampling frame provides a definition for the members of a population who are acceptable for inclusion in a specific sample (Denscombe, 2003; Morgan, 2008). The sampling frame for this study included all Ohio college students who completed an ODEP in high school. The actual sample for this study was drawn from the population defined by the study's sampling frame (Morgan, 2008). Purposive sampling has a similar logic to defining a sampling frame and the goal of both is to specify individuals or data sources eligible to participate in the study (Morgan, 2008). Defining a sampling frame, using purposive sampling, and establishing criteria for participation helped to provide the study with information rich participants.

The purpose of sampling in qualitative research is to obtain descriptive data and answer the how or why (Suter, 2012). The researcher used purposive sampling, a form of nonprobability sampling, to select the initial participants with the assumption that they represented the population, could provide expert information, and met the study's sampling criteria (Lavrakas, 2008; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling was appropriate for this phenomenological study because it seeks information-rich individuals (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010; Suter, 2012). According to Palys (2008), when a researcher engages in purposive sampling, he or she sees sampling as strategic choices to determine with whom and how to conduct research. Purposive sampling provided the

study with a sample consisting of 8 college students who were graduated from a large, urban school district in central Ohio. Originally, 10 participants were planned for this study. After five weeks of recruiting students to participate, eight students had accepted, returned their informed consent forms, and scheduled to interview. Saturation occurred around the sixth interview when the interview topics became exhausted, no new perspectives were uncovered, and the information derived from the interviews became repetitive. Two additional interviews were conducted to ensure the study reached saturation and no new themes emerged. Of the 8 participants for the study, the researcher began selecting initial participants by soliciting college students who met the study's participant criteria using a solicitation email detailing the purpose of the study and their participation. Solicitation for participants began by contacting former students who could provide the researcher with the email addresses of potential participants. At the time, the researcher had contact information for several former students who could lead the researcher to participants who met the participant criteria. The former students were instructed to obtain permission from the potential participants before supplying the researcher with their email addresses.

Purposive sampling is flexible, encompasses multiple interests, and contributes to a study's triangulation (Patton, 2002). In addition to purposive sampling to obtain initial participants, the researcher used snowball sampling to locate additional, information-rich individuals to participate. In qualitative research, using a combination of purposive sampling types helps the researcher triangulate data sources and enhances the credibility of the study (Patton, 2002). Obtaining participants through different types of purposive

sampling creates different data sources and potentially yields varied results (Patton, 2002).

Snowball sampling is a commonly used tactic for selecting participants in qualitative research (Noy, 2008). Using a snowball method allows the researcher to find additional participants through the recommendations of other participants, leading to a snowball effect (Noy, 2008). Students who received solicitation emails requesting their participation were asked to refer the researcher to additional students who may be interested in participating, after obtaining those students' permission to pass along their email addresses (Appendix A). The researcher used snowball sampling by asking the participants for recommendations for additional participants. If the participants were unable to provide the researcher with additional participants, the researcher solicited participants using social media. The sampling techniques produced a sample that had the potential to increase the understanding of ODEPs and student preparedness.

In phenomenology, an individual can never completely exhaust their experience and the possibility of new perceptions exists (Moustakas, 1994). Originally, 10 participants were planned for this study. After five weeks of recruiting students to participate, eight students had accepted, returned their informed consent forms, and scheduled to interview. During the three week interview period, the social media groups created to obtain additional participants remained open yet no one agreed to participate. Saturation occurred around the sixth interview when the interview topics became exhausted, no new perspectives were uncovered, and the information derived from the interviews became repetitive. Two additional interviews were conducted to ensure the study reached saturation and no new themes emerged. Had the study not reached data

saturation by the eighth interview, additional participants would have been sought to continue interviewing until the point of saturation.

Guarte and Barrios (2006) stated that the size of the sample in purposive sampling is the researcher's decision. No formula exists for deciding on the appropriate sample size (Patton, 2002; Suter, 2012). Patton (2002) referenced early studies by Freud and Piaget that focused on less than 10 individuals. Qualitative research is more concerned with a smaller sample size, comprised of participants who can best answer the research questions, than quantitative research (Denscombe, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2005; Suter, 2012; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). College students provided this study with data germane to the research question. A sample size too large may lead to extraneous and unwieldy text that adds little value to the study while selecting a sample size too small may not yield the data needed to answer the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Phenomenological interviews should range from 3 to 10 individuals, whereas interviews in a grounded theory study primarily require 20-30 individuals (Creswell, 2007; Morse, 2000; Sandelowski, 1995).

Individuals acquired through purposive sampling met the study's participant criteria. Potential participants received a solicitation email detailing the purpose of the study and their participation (Appendix A). Respondents who were interested in the study received and signed an informed consent through the mail (Appendix B). The informed consent letter included a return envelope with postage paid. Participants who agreed to participate then received further information about the in-depth interviews and began scheduling a date, time, and location of their choosing for the interview to occur.

The possibility existed that participants may have been the researcher's former students, increasing the chance for researcher bias. Several strategies are available to help qualitative researchers reduce bias in their research. According to Chenail (2011), qualitative researchers can journal and use interpersonal-process recall to examine any thoughts or impressions that surface during the data collection phase. Researchers can also review the journal during and after data analysis to check for unintentional bias (Chenail, 2011). The researcher journaled thoughts and impressions about each question included in the interviews, before and after their use with the study's participants.

Informed Consent

Participation in this study was voluntary. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) stated that participants have the right to know the nature of the study and have the option to withdraw from the study at any time they are uncomfortable or are no longer available to participate. Participants in this study received an informed consent form, via mail, prior to involvement in the study (Appendix B). Additionally, participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study before and after completing the in-depth interviews. Students who agreed to participate received an alias to use during the interviews. Upon receipt of the informed consent, students received further instructions on how to participate via email.

Confidentiality

To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher used software for generating random names and numbers to assign each participant an alias, pseudonym, to use during data collection. For example, a female participant was referred to as Danica instead of using her actual name. Interviews were digitally recorded and

transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber hired by the researcher. The transcriber also signed a non-disclosure agreement to ensure the names and details of the study remained confidential (Appendix C). Any identifiers were removed prior to transcription. The aliases, randomly assigned to each participant, were used during the interviews to ensure anonymity and confidentiality during transcription.

Data was stored on two laptops with encrypted password protection and a secondary password to access the data files on the researcher's personal computer. One laptop was used to store the participant's personal information including their real names and contact information. A second laptop was used for all other aspects of the data collection and analysis. The data stored on the second laptop did not include any identifiers and only included the aliases used.

In addition to the researcher's personal computer, data files were stored on a password protected, removable storage device that will remain secure in a lock box at the researcher's primary residence. A second USB storage device was used to backup and store the identifying participant information. An electronic security system at that residence further ensures participant confidentiality and security. For three years after completion of the study, collected data files will remain archived. After the three-year archived period, the researcher will destroy all data using a digital shredder. In addition to shredding, any physical documents will be burned.

Geographic Location

The Ohio Department of Education (2013) considers an urban district to consist of high student poverty, large minority populations, average parental education attainment, a mix of professions, and very large and dense populations. At the time of the study, there

were 55 districts in Ohio classified as urban because they contain those elements. For the purpose of this study, a large school district consisted of at least 20,000 students enrolled. In 2013, Ohio had five school districts that met the urban criteria and had at least 20,000 students enrolled with the two largest consisting of more than 40,000 students enrolled (Ohio Department of Education, 2013). The district chosen for this study had one of the largest number of students enrolled reaching nearly 50,000 students in 2013. Students completed the in-depth interviews through Skype®. Internet and communicative technologies allowed the researcher to communicate and elicit responses from participants throughout dispersed regions of Ohio.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data collection is fluid as the researcher's initial ideas about the phenomenon evolves (Suter, 2012). Qualitative data focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings that provide vivid, thick descriptions and have an impact on the reader (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This qualitative, phenomenological study design used in-depth interview data to explore student experiences with an ODEP and perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to or hindered college preparedness. Interviews are often used to explore the experiences and perceptions of individuals to generate qualitative data (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Students who decided to participate in the study remained in their natural setting and the researcher accommodated their needs.

Qualitative research is inductive aiming to explain social phenomena with description of and analysis of data including interviews, documents, and field notes (Suter, 2012). Much of qualitative data is in the form of narratives or texts gathered from

interviews, observations, documents, surveys, and other sources (Suter, 2012). This study used in-depth interviews for collecting data. Semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions as the primary means of data collection to obtain information-rich data. Open-ended or nonstructured interviews provide richer data than surveys or questionnaires and allow the researcher to gain insight into how the study's participants construct reality (Yin, 2012).

Purposive sampling was used to identify the study's participants. Although the researcher chose not to employ random sampling, which often lacks true generalization of the findings, qualitative research is not concerned with generalizability (Suter, 2012). In addition to narrative data, themes were identified to compare the perceived effectiveness of ODEPs on student preparedness. The possibility existed that participants were the researcher's former students, increasing the chance for researcher bias. Several strategies are available to help qualitative researchers reduce bias in their research. According to Chenail (2011), qualitative researchers can journal and use interpersonal-process recall to examine any thoughts or impressions that surface during the data collection phase. Researchers can also review the journal during and after data analysis to check for unintentional bias (Chenail, 2011). Maintaining a journal of thoughts and impressions about each question included in the interviews, before and after use with the study's participants, aided in reducing researcher bias. Furthermore, the researcher reviewed the journal throughout the study to check for bias and assumptions.

Field test. An expert review of questionnaires or interviews developed by a researcher should be conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the instruments (Jansen & Hak, 2005). The purpose is to review the questions with a neutral party to solicit

feedback about the instruments. Field tests and pilot studies enable researchers to determine if the questions are understandable and capable of answering the research question (Gill et al., 2008). Field tests and pilot studies are useful when little is known about a matter and researchers want to strengthen the success of the study (Persaud, 2010; Rowley, 2012). Conducting a field test allows the researcher to uncover design flaws, limitations, or weaknesses that can be revised prior to implementation with the main study participants (Hertzum, Bansler, Havn, & Simonsen, 2012; Neuman, 2003; Turner, 2010). Field tests never include individuals who meet the study's participant criteria, but experts who can provide feedback and make recommendations.

The researcher created an interview instrument for the study (Appendix D). A field test was completed with four experts to determine the instruments' fundamental reliability and validity (Neuman, 2003). The field test participants had experience developing and conducting phenomenological interviews and two are considered experts in phenomenological research. Participants provided feedback, through email, about the appropriateness of the data collection tools for the population and the ability of the instruments to answer the research question. The participants reviewed the original interview instrument, with suggested probes, and made recommendations for improvement. After the field test, the questions for the in-depth interviews were revised and probing questions were added to certain questions (Appendix E). Table 2 provides an overview of the feedback and recommendations made by the field test reviewers.

Table 2

Field Test Feedback & Recommendations

| Reviewers | Feedback & Recommendations |
|-----------|--|
| #1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make changes to the opening script. • Do not add the 1.5 hours to the opening script. • Replace non open-ended words. • Revise the wording of certain questions for the audience. • Including the probes may be inappropriate because you do not know what a participant will say. |
| #2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make changes to the opening script. • Probes may not be appropriate for University of Phoenix expectations. |
| #3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reword 2 questions so that they are understood better by the sample. • Probes make assumptions, so be flexible in your usage. |
| #4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions asking the participants to “describe” experiences are good and consistent with phenomenology. • Questions 1-3 trigger a descriptive perspective by the participant. • Change the words contributed and hindered because they imply an expected outcome. • Reword certain questions to ensure you are just collecting data and not trying to interpret it yet. |

Interviews. Phenomenological researchers focus on an individual’s lived experience and strive to guide participants to revealing their lived experiences as close to what they were (Seidman, 2012). Phenomenologists often use in-depth interviewing to explore individuals’ experiences and the meanings they apply to those experiences (Seidman, 2012). Epoche was used to ensure prejudgments were set aside prior to the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Participants who are good storytellers, committed, and able to reflect on their experience with an ODEP were chosen to interview (Bogdan &

Taylor, 1975). Establishing a comfortable environment and rapport with the interviewees allow researchers to increase their understanding of an individual's experience, bring it to life, and share it with others (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

In addition to journaling and using Epoche to reduce researcher bias, extensive preparation can reduce bias further (Turner, 2010). Preparing for the interviews can alleviate bias and some of the common problems that can occur when no preparation exists (Turner, 2010). Preparation for the interviews included selecting settings with little distraction, a purpose of the interview that remained consistent, terms of confidentiality, interview format and length, contact information, addressing participant questions or concerns, and obtaining all materials needed to digitally record interviews (Turner, 2010). Designing an interview schedule, or interview questions, requires the researcher to develop questions that are likely to yield data pertinent to the purpose of the study (Gill et al., 2008). The interview questions were tested to ensure questions yield rich data (Appendix E). Scripting that included details of the study, informed consent, ethical principles, and confidentiality was used at the beginning and end of each interview. Contact information for the researcher and the next steps for the study were mentioned in the conclusion.

The study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews consisting of open-ended questions as the primary means of data collection. The purpose of in-depth interviews is not to test a hypothesis or evaluate, but to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of others and the meanings they construct (Rowley, 2012; Seidman, 2012). Interviewing is an ideal method for studying educational organizations because it allows the researcher to investigate the people who make up the organization (Seidman, 2012). Although,

numerous researchers study education in the United States, few study it from the perspective of students, teachers, and others that contribute to the schooling experience (Seidman, 2012). Interviews are appropriate for researchers who are interested in a student's experiences, perceptions, and meanings applied to those experiences (Seidman, 2012). The goal of the interviews was to have participants reconstruct their experiences with an ODEP to explore their perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to their college preparedness.

Semi-structured interviews consist of pre-determined questions that address the main areas of exploration while allowing the interviewer and interviewee to probe further into the phenomena (Gill et al., 2008). Open-ended interviews provide richer data than surveys and allow the researcher to gain insight into how the study's participants construct reality (Yin, 2012). Open-ended interviews are structured in terms of the questions and participants will be asked the same questions (Turner, 2010). Questions were open-ended, neutral, clearly worded, and carefully structured to elicit rich data (Turner, 2010). During interviews, interviewees shared their unique experiences and provided more than yes or no responses. It is common for new questions to emerge as the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee progresses (DiCicco & Crabtree, 2006). Participants were asked questions one at a time, requesting elaboration when needed.

Open-ended, neutral, sensitive, and comprehensible questions are ideal for qualitative interview questions (Gill et al., 2008). The interviews began with easier questions and progressed to the more difficult or comprehensive questions to build confidence and rapport with the interviewees (Gill et al., 2008). The researcher remained

poised throughout the interviews and used occasional nods of the head to demonstrate an understanding of a participant's response and maintain control of the interview (Turner, 2010). Researchers should avoid leading questions and provide the participants with responses that let them know the researcher believes they are the experts on the topic (Flanagan, 1954; Rowley, 2012). If the researcher does not understand the participant's response or believes the participant did not understand the question, the researcher can repeat the questions with some clarifying reference (Flanagan, 1954). The researcher incorporated the research on conducting interviews in the interview protocol and adhered to those procedures during each interview.

Participants received a copy of the interview questions to review prior to the start of the interview and used them to follow along during the interviews. Interviews with open-ended questions were conducted through Skype®. This allowed interviewees to remain in their college setting while reflecting and responding to questions. The interviewer accommodated the time and date specified by the student for each interview, which lasted as long as it took each interviewee to answer the questions thoroughly without being hurried. Lengthy periods of time should be scheduled because it will take time to get started and establish rapport with the interviewees (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Seidman, 2012). The interviews lasted anywhere from 25 to 50 minutes.

Data obtained from the interviews were analyzed to uncover themes and the essences of the participants' lived experiences. Extracting codes and themes from open-ended responses can be difficult with the in-depth detail gathered from these interviews. NVivo 10 software was used to help make sense of nonnumerical data from the open-ended questions used in the data collection tools. Sorting through the rich data obtained

through open-ended interviews, from various interviewees, allowed the researcher to reduce bias (Turner, 2010). Final analysis of the in-depth interviews was completed using a modified van Kaam method.

Role of the researcher. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is as important as the data collection instruments (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological researchers are immersed in their research, emic, co-constructors of knowledge, and constantly reflecting (Pascal, Johnson, Dore, & Trainor, 2010). As a behavioral health liaison, the researcher for this study had training and experience conducting behavioral interviews with a psychological focus. Behavioral based interviewing requires extensive probing to uncover an individual's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings related to the example provided. The researcher had also trained others on the best practices for dealing with individuals with mental illness and other behavioral disorders. In addition to completing extensive coursework in psychology, working for a behavioral health company enabled the researcher to understand better how individuals make meaning and interpret those meanings for others to understand.

Transcription. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber hired by the researcher. Using a professional transcriber to transcribe the interviews, and then allowing the participants to review their responses, is a form of member-checking (Stake, 2010). Through member-checking with the interview transcripts, researchers are able to determine if their findings are complete and accurate (Houghton et al., 2013; Stake, 2010). Any identifiers were removed prior to transcription. The aliases, randomly assigned to each participant, were used during the interviews to ensure anonymity and confidentiality during transcription. The transcriber

signed a non-disclosure agreement to ensure the names and details of the study remained confidential (Appendix C).

Transcribed audio files were sent to the researcher in Microsoft Word format and checked against the audio recording to ensure accuracy. The file was then converted into an Adobe© pdf format and sent to the participants via email, along with the audio files, to check for accuracy. Transcriptions of the interviews can additionally help reduce researcher bias (Turner, 2010). Participants responded to the email stating that they agreed with the transcriptions or advised the researcher of any corrections that needed to be made. The researcher checked the audio file and spoke with the participant over the phone to discuss any proposed changes or inaccuracies.

Credibility and Transferability

Qualitative research requires rigor and a creative approach to assessing quality (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Quantitative research often uses the terms validity and reliability, but credibility and transferability are the preferred terms for qualitative research (Byrne, 2001). Credibility and transferability are two common criteria used to assess the rigor of qualitative research (Houghton et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study, credibility and validity were used synonymously as well as transferability and reliability.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the trustworthiness or believability of the findings (Houghton et al., 2013). In qualitative research, validity is used synonymously with credibility, achieved through consistency checks (Suter, 2012). Validity deals with the instruments used to answer the research questions, and it is the most important element of a study (Suter, 2012). A study can be reliable and lack validity if what is

being measured does not match the purpose of the study (Suter, 2012). Meaningful responses that answer the research questions strengthen the validity of the study. Qualitative researchers can reinforce validity through consistency checks that ensure codes or categories are consistent with the purpose of the study (Suter, 2012). Stakeholder checks ensured that the data and interpretations accurately reflected participants' experiences with ODEPs (Suter, 2012; Yin, 2012). The researcher strengthened the findings from this study through a variety of sampling techniques, member-checking, Epoche, and journaling for bias.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the ability to transfer the findings to another situation or context, without distorting the findings from the original study (Byrne, 2001; Houghton et al., 2013). Incorporating thick descriptions in the research can increase the transferability of a study's findings (Houghton et al., 2013). In educational research, it is absurd to believe that a study's findings result in a one size fits all solution to a problem (Suter, 2012). What works in one geographical location, school district, or individual school building may not work for another (Suter, 2012). Qualitative studies do not seek to generalize to a larger population. Researchers or readers, who want to determine if this study's findings will transfer to their contexts, can use the thick descriptions provided to make that determination.

Similar to transferability is reliability. Reliability refers to the researcher's ability to ensure that if another researcher followed the same procedures, he or she could conduct the same study and arrive at the same conclusions (Yin, 2008). If a participant provides the same information when asked twice, the study's reliability increases (Suter,

2012). Students who were consistent with their responses increased the reliability and transferability of the study.

Data Analysis

Analysis begins as the researcher begins to take apart the data (Stake, 1995). Data was analyzed using the modified van Kaam method. The modified van Kaam method includes seven steps for analyzing transcribed interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Analysis of each participant's transcribed interview occurred following the seven steps. Prior to analysis, Epoche was used to ensure prejudgments were set aside and the researcher was unbiasedly receptive to the information (Moustakas, 1994). Step one, known as horizontalization, began by listing expressions relevant to the experience and preliminary grouping (Moustakas, 1994). During this first step, every expression relevant to the experience was listed, free from assumptions or preconceptions. The second step consisted of reducing and eliminating to determine the invariant constituents (Moustakas, 1994). Expressions that did not contain moments of the experience necessary for understanding it, could not be labeled, and were vague or repetitive were eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). It is important that when a researcher narrows down the data, he or she discards extraneous information because extended text is cumbersome and an overload for information processing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After reducing, the remaining invariant constituents were clustered and thematically labeled (Moustakas, 1994). Good qualitative analysis requires critical examination, interpretation, and synthesis that when done properly, produces meaningful patterns, themes, categories, and new ideas (Suter, 2012). NVivo software was used to help make sense of nonnumerical data from the open-ended questions used in the data collection tools. The NVivo

software assisted with organizing the data and possibly revealing missed connections or patterns between the data. The themes that were clustered are the core themes of the participants' lived experiences.

Validation occurred next when the researcher checked the invariant constituents and their themes against each participant's transcription (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher checked to ensure the invariant constituents and themes were explicitly expressed in the transcription or compatible to the transcription (Moustakas, 1994). The final steps resulted in the researcher creating a textural-structural description for each participant that provided a depiction of the meanings and essences of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). These textural-structural descriptions included the invariant constituents, themes, and verbatim examples from the transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). A composite description of the participants' meanings or essences was created to represent the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). Following the modified van Kaam method allowed the researcher to analyze and synthesize the data while presenting the findings in an organized manner.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the process and rationale for selecting a qualitative, transcendental-phenomenological design that is descriptive in nature. Data collected for the study came from in-depth interviews describing the participants' lived experiences. Data analysis included students' experiences with an ODEP and their perceptions on how ODEPs contributed to their college preparedness. This chapter also included the transferability and credibility of the study. Chapter 4 contains a presentation and analysis of the data. A discussion that details how the qualitative, phenomenological study

followed the research protocol outlined in Chapter 3. An in-depth analysis of the data and how it relates to the research question is presented. Chapter 5 includes an interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 4. Any themes from the findings are revealed in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 5 also includes the implications on stakeholders, recommendations for educational leaders, and a summary of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose for conducting this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. The study focused on one research question to explore students' experiences with an ODEP, and their perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to or hindered college preparedness. Chapter 4 includes a detailed analysis of interviews with eight college students who completed at least one ODEP in high school and transitioned to an IHE. The findings include the perceptions, observations, reflections, and lived experiences explored during the in-depth interviews. The information presented in Chapter 4 includes an explanation of the recruitment and data collection process. Additionally, Chapter 4 presents the core themes associated with the study's research question: How do college students, who completed an online dual enrollment program while in high school, perceive the impact that the ODEP had on preparation for college?

Data Collection Process

This study used a phenomenological method. Using a phenomenological method allowed students to describe their lived experiences in an ODEP and perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to their college preparedness (Adams & Manen, 2008; Hammersley, 2004); Van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011). During one on one interviews, students were asked to share their perceptions, experiences, and feelings associated with ODEPs and their transition to college. Results of the study add to the body of knowledge and research in the field of education, particularly on improving the transition from high

school to an IHE. In-depth interviews were conducted via Skype that enabled the students to participate remotely and be observed.

Recruitment and Saturation. The specific target population consisted of the Ohio college students who met the study's participant criteria. To be eligible to participate, each student met the study's participant criteria that included students who enrolled in and completed at least one online dual enrollment (ODE) course while in high school, maintained a cumulative high school grade point average of 2.5 or higher, and currently attend a four-year college in Ohio. Students enrolled in online colleges or universities did not qualify for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select eight college students who were able to reflect on their experiences during in-depth interviews.

Recruitment lasted for five weeks and began by soliciting students who met the participant criteria through email. As a former teacher in the district where students completed ODEPs, the researcher had personal knowledge of the targeted population and contact information for students who completed ODEPs. Solicitation began by inviting 30 college students to participate in the in-depth interviews. Only four of the 30 students solicited accepted the invitation to interview. Students who chose not to interview had dropped out of college or no longer attended a four-year college, and did not meet the participant criteria. Using snowball sampling, each of the 30 students solicited were asked to refer the researcher to additional participants who may meet the study's participant criteria. Two more students accepted the invitation to interview through the use of snowball sampling.

Three weeks into the recruitment process, six students had returned the informed consent forms and scheduled to interview. At that time, groups were created on two

social network sites to locate additional students. More than 43 students joined the social network groups, but only five met the participant criteria, and only two committed to interview. The study had eight students who committed to interview and interviews were conducted over a three week period. During the three week interview period, the social media groups remained open and 22 new students joined the groups. Four met the participant criteria and were contacted three times, but did not schedule to interview. One potential participant replied and said he could not interview with his schedule, but the other three never responded.

A total of eight students committed to interview via Skype. Each student completed high school with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. Students ranged from having completed one year of college, while two students were weeks away from college graduation. Students attended six different colleges and universities. Table 3 provides key characteristics of the study’s participants.

Table 3

Study Participant Characteristics

| | Gender | Years of College Completed | Race/Ethnicity |
|--------------|--------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Participants | | | |
| Gabby | F | 1 | Black |
| Fabiana | F | 4 | Asian |
| Felicia | F | 2 | Black |
| Gabriel | M | 1 | Mixed |
| Luciana | F | 4 | Black |
| Milena | F | 2 | Black |
| Monica | F | 2 | Black |
| Sofia | F | 3 | White |

Qualitative research is more concerned with a smaller sample size, comprised of participants who can best answer the research questions (Denscombe, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2005; Suter, 2012; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Eight students provided this study with data germane to the research question. Data collection continued until data saturation occurred. Saturation occurred around the sixth interview when the interview topics became exhausted, no new perspectives were uncovered, and the information derived from the interviews became repetitive. Two additional interviews were conducted to ensure the study reached saturation and no new themes emerged.

Interviews. Following the procedures outlined earlier in the study, students were assigned an alias to use during the study. An online, random name generator was used to select and assign the aliases. Through email, students scheduled 45 minute interviews with the researcher and answered 12 questions created to explore the students' experiences with an ODEP. Through an extensive literature review on dual enrollment programs in America and student preparedness for college, several concepts emerged that helped to structure the interview questions. Appendix F contains the goals and objectives of each research question. Additional, predetermined questions were used to probe the students when their responses were vague.

Interviews were conducted throughout the day, over a three week period, using Skype. During the face to face, virtual interviews, students shared their feelings, perceptions, and experiences with an ODEP. Throughout the interviews, the researcher took notes observing characteristics of the setting surroundings and of the students including, body language, eye moment, vocal inflection, and their willingness to respond

to the questions openly. Interviews lasted between 25 and 50 minutes. Students who had a tougher transition to college, or were passionate about the topic, had a lot more information to share.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, Epoche was established to ensure prejudgments were set aside to be unbiasedly receptive to the information. Epoche continued throughout the study to ensure that personal beliefs and perceptions did not influence the findings and results. Data analysis followed a modified van Kaam method. The modified van Kaam method includes seven steps for analyzing transcribed interviews. Analysis of each transcribed interview followed the seven steps.

Horizonalization. Step one, known as horizonalization, began by listing expressions relevant to the experience and preliminary grouping. Using the transcriptions, every expression relevant to the experience was revealed for each participant. NVivo 10 was used to code the transcriptions of the in-depth interviews. Using the relevant expressions, NVivo uncovered 470 nodes, or unique expressions relevant to the experience.

Reduction and Elimination. The next step in the van Kaam method was reducing and eliminating data to determine the invariant constituents. During step two, the 470 nodes were reduced to 31 after eliminating expressions that did not contain moments of the experience necessary for understanding it, could not be labeled, were vague, and repetitive or similar. Further reduction led to grouping certain invariant constituents, reducing the invariant constituents to 19. Each expression contained a moment necessary for understanding the experience and could be labeled.

Clustering and Labeling. After reduction, the remaining 19 invariant constituents were clustered and thematically labeled. A critical examination, interpretation, and synthesis was done to produce meaningful patterns, themes, and categories. Validation occurred next by checking the invariant constituents and their themes against each participant's transcription. Each invariant constituent and theme was checked to ensure they were explicitly expressed in the transcription or compatible to the transcription.

Textural-Structural Descriptions. The final step in analysis resulted in the researcher creating a textural-structural description for each participant that provides a depiction of the meanings and essences of their lived experiences (Appendix G). These textural-structural descriptions include the invariant constituents, themes, and verbatim examples from the transcripts. A composite description of the participants' meanings or essences was also created to represent the group as a whole. The invariant constituents included in the textural-structural descriptions, in the form of verbatim examples from the transcripts, provide a foundation for the development of the core themes.

Core Themes and Initial Findings

The intent of this study was to explore the lived experiences of college students who completed an ODEP in high school and gain insight into how they perceive the impact that ODEPs had on their preparation for college. As a result of the preliminary grouping, reductions, and thematic labeling, three core themes critical to the study's research question emerged. The three core themes include: 1) adapting to college culture, 2) ODEPs as a positive stepping stone, and 3) skills gained from ODEPs. The three core themes, in order of prevalence and in greater detail, follows.

Theme 1: Adapting to college culture. The first core theme of adapting to college culture was determined from six invariant constituents referenced during the in-depth interviews. The invariant constituents or subthemes fundamental to the first theme included: 1) different expectations (8 out of 8 participants; 100%), 2) a harder workload, including a faster pace and more challenging content (7 out of 8 participants; 87%), 3) finding balance (7 out of 8 participants, 87%), 4) being self-reliant (6 out of 8 participants; 75%), 5) paying for an education (5 out of 8 participants; 62%), and 6) following a syllabus (1 out of 8 participants; 12%). Table 4 displays the subthemes for Theme 1, along with the number and percentage of participants who referenced the subtheme.

Table 4

Subthemes and Percentages of Participant Responses to Theme 1: Adapting to College Culture

| Theme 1: Adapting to College Culture | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Subthemes | Number of Students Who Referenced the Subtheme (out of 8) | Percentage of Students Who Referenced the Subtheme |
| Different Expectations | 8 | 100% |
| Harder Workload | 7 | 87% |
| Finding Balance | 7 | 87% |
| Self-Reliant | 6 | 75% |
| Paying for Education | 5 | 62% |
| Following a Syllabus | 1 | 12% |

Students perceived ODEPs as helping them, but this first theme reveals areas for which students believed ODEPs had prepared them, but because of the online nature of ODEPs, students were not prepared for these challenges. Table 5 is a representation of

the key challenges affecting students and the predominance of each. The numbers for each subtheme correspond to the number of times that participant referenced that subtheme during the interviews. The subthemes are paraphrased from the preliminary groupings.

Table 5

Frequency of Adapting to College Culture in Participants Responses

| Subthemes | Participants and Frequency of Responses | | | | | | | | Total |
|----------------------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|
| | Danica | Fabiana | Felicia | Gabriel | Luciana | Milena | Monica | Sofia | |
| Different Expectations | 4 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 5 | 6 | 49 |
| Harder Workload (Pace & Content) | 6 | 9 | | 6 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 38 |
| Self-Reliant | | 6 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | | 6 | 25 |
| Finding Balance | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 2 | 3 | 6 | 22 |
| Paying for Education | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 6 |
| Following a Syllabus | | | | | | 4 | | | 4 |
| Total | 13 | 26 | 10 | 16 | 19 | 25 | 9 | 26 | 144 |

Students were able to reflect on their lived experiences and believed that ODEPs had prepared them for college adequately. During the in-depth interviews, students were also able to explore the challenges they encountered when transitioning to college. Some challenges were unique to certain students, but every student agreed that adapting to college culture was difficult and something for which they were not prepared. Adapting to college culture created the most obstacles for students transitioning to college and revealed areas for which ODEPs negatively impacted the students' transition and did not contribute to their preparedness.

Subtheme 1: Different expectations. All eight participants (100%) had difficulty adapting to the expectations encountered during their first year of college. Students were not prepared for the differences between high school teachers, ODEP professors, and college professors, particularly the increased expectations and standards the college professors held. Monica revealed that she went “from being where I didn't have to do much work to get an A to where if I didn't do work it was an automatic F.” During the ODEPs, students had the assistance of a high school teacher and many of the ODEP professors were lenient in several areas. According to Fabiana, “It was difficult because they, college expects you or like your professors expect you to do your assignments on time and there's like really not any negotiating on when you can turn in assignments.” She wished that she “would have received a more rigorous [ODEP] course” that was on par with college expectations. In addition to increased expectations, the workload encountered was not something students were prepared for.

Subtheme 2: Harder workload. The college workload, including pace and content, proved to be difficult for almost every student in this study. Seven out of the eight (87%) students suffered because they were not prepared for a more challenging college workload. Danica revealed that, “the work load and the length of my classes and stuff was way different”! She did not anticipate those differences, took too many classes, and performed poorly her first semester. Luciana found that the pace in college was much faster than what she had experienced in her ODEP and found it difficult to perform well without the “one on one” attention she received in high school. She felt “despair” because she had never been challenged with work at this content level. As difficult as

adapting to the harder workload in college, students believed finding balance had a negative impact on their transition to college.

Subtheme 3: Finding balance. Finding balance in college was difficult for seven of the eight (87%) students who participated in this study. Finding balance was not as difficult for Felicia, but she learned that she was on her own and “obviously had a lot to learn” about college life. Felicia learned to separate her academics from her social life when she was younger. Although they had an idea of how much time they would take to dedicate to academics, they were unable to prioritize and balance their academics with their social lives. Fabiana struggled to find balance because her ODEP in high school was very lenient. Sofia had a very difficult time finding balance and decided to focus solely on academics. It took her some time to figure out that “you just have a lot of free time and you know it [everything] is your decision.” With so much free time, Gabriel found himself doing “a lot of dumb stuff” instead of focusing on his studies. With disappointment in her expression, Monica revealed, “I was just more so busy partying than focusing on school.” Finding balance and prioritizing was difficult in part because students did not have professors keeping them on track, but instead they had to become self-reliant.

Subtheme 4: Self-Reliant. Six out of the eight (75%) students interviewed found it difficult to become self-reliant and take responsibility for their own education. Self-reliance was the biggest obstacle keeping Gabriel from finding balance in college. Milena referred to college as “a big eye opener!” Milena learned that achieving success in college meant she would need to rely on herself and there would not be professors pushing or reminding her. She shared, “It's a lot more people than what you expect and

you have to reach out and get to know the professor, like for the professor to know your name”. Students did not have anyone reminding them of due dates, forcing them to go to class, or allowing them to turn in missed assignments. Some students quickly realized that they would need to take ownership of their actions because they were paying for education and did not realize the costs associated with attending a university.

Subtheme 5: Paying for an education. In high school, students received a free education, including their ODEP courses. Books, supplies, and other materials were provided at no charge to the students. Five out of the eight (62%) students did not anticipate the additional costs associated with attending a university and some students could not afford the materials needed in a timely manner. Students like Fabiana and Luciana received scholarships that paid for their education, but like Milena, they realized they needed additional funding for books, living expenses, food, and transportation. For some students, they had to wait until they received student loan refunds from the school to buy the necessary materials. This was a setback for several students. Milena stated, “You have to pay for a lot of different things, like that you don't expect.” Additionally, Milena found it difficult to follow a syllabus in college.

Subtheme 6: Following a syllabus. Milena stated that her ODEP professor was very strict with deadlines and used a syllabus, but because she was working with high school students, she ended up being lenient with the students. Instead of holding the students accountable for following the syllabus, the ODEP professor would remind them of due dates and took the blame if she forgot to remind them. Although Milena was the only (12%) student to mention her struggle following a college syllabus, she mentioned it

in three different interview questions and insisted that ODEPs needed to incorporate them.

Adapting to college culture was problematic for the students interviewed. They did not anticipate the different expectations, a heavier and more challenging workload, finding balance and prioritizing in a larger environment, the need to be self-reliant, the costs associated with college, and the importance of adhering to a syllabus. Students did not perceive these difficulties as hindering their entire success in college, but they transitioned into college believing they were prepared through the ODEP course they completed. In addition to stress, challenges, and low grades received during their first year of college, there was an impact on their confidence. Students began to doubt their ability to be successful in college. Completing their ODEPs online and in a high school classroom did not prepare them for the transition to a face-to-face college, but students still believed that ODEPs were a positive stepping stone.

Theme 2: ODEPs as a positive stepping stone. Even with the challenges each student experienced, they reflected on their experience with an ODEP and realized it was a positive stepping stone and helpful for their transition to college. The second core theme of ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone was determined from five invariant constituents referenced during the in-depth interviews. The invariant constituents or subthemes fundamental to the second theme included: 1) exposure to college including the workload and expectations (8 out of 8 participants; 100%), 2) ODEPs as a good experience or opportunity (7 out of 8 participants; 87%), 3) ODEPs helping to prepare (6 out of 8 participants; 75%), 4) earning college credit (4 out of 8 participants; 50%), and 5) ODEPs are free (3 out of 8 participants; 37%). Table 6 displays the subthemes for

Theme 2, along with the number and percentage of participants who referenced the subtheme.

Table 6

Subthemes and Percentages of Participant Responses to Theme 2: ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone

| Theme 2: ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone | | |
|---|---|--|
| Subthemes | Number of Students Who Referenced the Subtheme (out of 8) | Percentage of Students Who Referenced the Subtheme |
| Exposure to College | 8 | 100% |
| Good Experience or Opportunity | 7 | 87% |
| Helps to Prepare | 6 | 75% |
| Earned College Credit | 4 | 50% |
| Free | 3 | 37% |

Table 7 is a representation of ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone and the predominance of each. The numbers for each subtheme correspond to the number of times that participant referenced that subtheme during the interviews. The subthemes are paraphrased from the preliminary groupings.

Table 7

Frequency of ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone in Participants Responses

| Subthemes | Participants and Frequency of Responses | | | | | | | | Total |
|---------------------------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|-----------|
| | Danica | Fabiana | Felicia | Gabriel | Luciana | Milena | Monica | Sofia | |
| Good Experience/ Opportunity | 3 | 2 | 4 | 5 | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 21 |
| Exposure to College | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 18 |
| Helps to Prepare | 2 | | 2 | 2 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 12 |
| Earned College Credit | | 2 | 1 | | 4 | | | 1 | 8 |
| Free | | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | 4 |
| Total | 8 | 6 | 11 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 15 | 63 |

Students believed that completing an ODEP was a positive stepping stone for several reasons. Each of the subthemes provide examples from the students who participated in the study. The ODEPs may not have prepared students for all facets of transitioning to college, but students believed ODEPs gave them exposure to college, was a good experience or opportunity, helped to prepare them, and allowed them to earn college credit for free. These subthemes had a positive impact on the students' transition to college.

Subtheme 1: Exposure to college. Eight of students who participated, 100%, were glad that they completed an ODEP because it exposed them to college. Through PSEO, Gabriel was given “a small taste of what it would be like in college.” Monica believed PSEO helped students “realize what is sort of what is expected of them once they get to school” and reflecting on her experience, she is glad she completed it. Felicia

also believed it was a “good stepping stone before you get to college” and encourages her sister to complete ODEPs while in high school. Students believed their transition to college would have been even more challenging had they not received exposure during their ODEP, and that is why they continue to believe it was a good experience.

Subtheme 2: Good experience or opportunity. Seven out of the eight (87%) participants believed completing an ODEP was a good experience or opportunity. Luciana was the only student who did not perceive an ODEP as a good experience because it was not much different from her regular high school courses. Danica perceived PSEO as “a good experience for anybody in high school to go through to get ready for college.” Sofia is an advocate for PSEO and stated, “If I hear a student who is thinking AP versus PSEO I always go straight and say do the PSEO because it's just such a great experience [and she] would have even less of an idea of what the heck was going on when [she] got to college.” Gabriel perceived ODEPs as a “good opportunity” and believed it can offer a challenge for many students that can help to prepare for college.

Subtheme 3: Helps to prepare. Six of the eight (75%) students interviewed perceived ODEPs as helping them to prepare for college. There were certain skills that they gained from completing ODEPs, in greater detail below, and the exposure to college level work helped to prepare them. Felicia believed that completing an ODEP reduced issues and stated, “I think it's a good experience for anybody in high school to go through to get ready for college and just even in high school, being ahead of everybody else and not having trouble when you get to college.” Sofia also perceived ODEPs as helping her to prepare for college because it was different from her regular high school courses and the ODEP taught her about college courses. On top of the elements of an ODEP that

helped to prepare students, students also perceived ODEPs as a positive stepping stone because they were able to earn college credit.

Subtheme 4: Earned college credit. Four out of eight (50%) students were happy to earn college credit while in high school and believed this was a positive stepping stone. Fabiana liked being able to earn college credit while in high school because she was “knocking two birds out with one stone.” Aside from the challenges, Felicia stated, “you get college credit and you get experience under your belt.” Luciana had mixed emotions about her ODEP, but was “positively affected” because she earned college credit. Students did not anticipate some of the costs associated with attending a university, but earning free college credit through an ODEP had a positive impact on students.

Subtheme 5: Free. Three (37%) students interviewed perceived ODEPs as a positive stepping stone because they were free. The students earned free college credit and did not have to pay for any course materials. Felicia did not anticipate the various costs associated with attending a brick and mortar college, but was thankful to have an opportunity to earn college credit for free with her ODEP. Sofia revealed there were a lot of materials to accompany her ODEP and revealed “Our textbooks were provided for free, we didn’t have to pay anything out of pocket.” In addition to providing students with a free opportunity to earn college credit and gaining exposure to college, students revealed certain skills that they gained from completing ODEPs. Those skills had a significant impact on their preparedness for college.

Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs. Reflecting on how students perceived the impact ODEPs had on their preparation for college, each student agreed that there were certain skills strengthened by ODEPs. The third core theme of skills gained from ODEPs

was determined from eight invariant constituents referenced during the in-depth interviews. The invariant constituents or subthemes fundamental to the third and final theme included the following skills: 1) time management (8 out of 8 participants; 100%), 2) writing (6 out of 8 participants; 75%), 3) help seeking (4 out of 8 participants; 50%), 4) studying (3 out of 8 participants; 37%), 5) reading (2 out of 8 participants; 25%), 6) research (1 out of 8 participants; 12%), 7) note taking (1 out of 8 participants; 12%), and 8) exam taking (1 out of 8 participants; 12%). Table 8 displays the subthemes for Theme 3, along with the number and percentage of participants who referenced the subtheme.

Table 8

Subthemes and Percentages of Participant Responses to Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs

| Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Subthemes | Number of Students Who Referenced the Subtheme (out of 8) | Percentage of Students Who Referenced the Subtheme |
| Time Management | 8 | 100% |
| Writing | 6 | 75% |
| Help Seeking | 4 | 50% |
| Studying | 3 | 37% |
| Reading | 2 | 25% |
| Research | 1 | 12% |
| Note Taking | 1 | 12% |
| Exam taking | 1 | 12% |

Table 9 is a representation of the skills gained from completing an ODEP that contributed to their college preparedness, and the predominance of each. The numbers for each subtheme correspond to the number of times that participant referenced that

subtheme during the interviews. The subthemes are paraphrased from the preliminary groupings.

Table 9

Frequency of Skills Gained from ODEPs in Participants Responses

| Subthemes | Participants and Frequency of Responses | | | | | | | | Total |
|-----------------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| | Danica | Fabiana | Felicia | Gabriel | Luciana | Milena | Monica | Sofia | |
| Writing | 2 | 5 | 5 | | 2 | | 2 | 1 | 17 |
| Time Management | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 15 |
| Help Seeking | | 1 | | | 2 | | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| Reading | | | | | | 2 | | 1 | 3 |
| Studying | | | | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 3 |
| Research | | | 2 | | | | | | 2 |
| Note Taking | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Exam Taking | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 3 | 7 | 11 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 12 | 49 |

Although each student had different experiences in an ODEP, students agreed that completing an ODEP in high school equipped them with better time management, writing, help seeking, studying, reading, research, note taking, and exam taking skills. For many students, these three skills were tied to the weekly assignments they were given in their ODEPs. Many of the students had a difficult time trying to find balance in college, but all eight (100%) students perceived ODEPs as equipping them with time management skills.

Subtheme 1: Time management. Students perceived ODEPs as equipping them with time management skills because they were given an idea of how much time it would

take to complete an assignment and how much time they would need to dedicate to their studies. Gabriel believed that the ODEP helped him learn “the amount of work I would have to put in, and it would be more work because I would have more classes.” Monica revealed time management as the number one skill she gained from completing an ODEP. When discussing the skills gained from completing an ODEP, Fabiana commented, “The material wasn't hard but it was just like making sure that I got the paper in on time so PSEO just kind of forced students to ensure that you're meeting deadlines basically.” Milena had a professor during her ODEP that set a lot of deadlines. At times, those deadlines would be adjusted, but Milena learned “how to meet deadlines because she [the professor] was big on deadlines and actually reading stuff”. In addition to managing her time, Felicia believed completing an ODEP made her a better writer.

Subtheme 2: Writing. Six (75%) students perceived ODEPs as improving their writing skills and believed that had a positive impact on their transition to college. Luciana realized that her ODEP helped her when she took her first English course in college. She revealed, “The professors noticed that I had some higher level ability to organize papers and whatnot, and I attribute that to the professor that was really helpful for my online class and post-secondary classroom in high school.” Danica struggled on her first writing assignment in college, but was confident because she had learned how to write college papers in her ODEP. She stated, “Yeah my writing skills got like way better.” Fabiana believed that her ODEP helped her to understand better the importance of citing sources in papers and how to properly cite them for a college course. Sofia's writing skills also improved by completing an ODEP, but she was more grateful for the help seeking skills that she gained.

Subtheme 3: Help seeking. In high school, students had teachers reaching out to them, but in college, it was their responsibility to seek help and 50% of the students interviewed gained the necessary skills to do so. With the help seeking skills Monica gained, she learned to approach professors and realized they actually cared to help. During the ODEP, Sofia was required to email her professor to discuss and obtain feedback on her assignments. She felt like the ODEP “really prepared me to reach out to my instructor and ask important questions that you, like helped me better myself and, so subsequently if I did poorly on a test in college now, I will go to office hours now and say here's my exam, here's the answer key you gave me, and I was wondering if we could go through it a little bit and figure out what I did wrong and why like why I did so poorly on the exam.” Sofia and Luciana also realized that they would need to seek help in other ways like tutoring and visiting professors during office hours. Four students perceived the help seeking skills gained from ODEPs as invaluable to their success in college, but others gained study skills that had a positive impact.

Subtheme 4: Studying. Three (37%) students believed that ODEPs provided them with studying skills that they did not have in high school. Luciana, Milena, and Sofia were able to obtain good grades in high school without a lot of effort. Completing ODEPs helped them to realize they would actually need to study in college and taught them that studying was more than just reviewing materials. Luciana stated, “I gained kind of decent study techniques that I took with me to college.” Her study techniques were directly related to one of the ODEPs she completed in high school which required her to learn large amounts of vocabulary. According to Sofia, “I learned a lot about

studying on my own, that's one thing in high school I did not learn." Those studying techniques also improved her reading skills.

Subtheme 5: Reading. Two (25%) students, Milena and Sofia, believed that ODEPs equipped them with better reading skills. Milena revealed that in college, students actually had to read for understanding instead of simply reading to know what happened. Sofia commented that the ODEP "really helped me figure out what is important when I read this entire chapter in a book, what is important to read out of it, take out of it." Similar to the skills that follow, reading was not a common skill among all students.

Subtheme 6: Research. Felicia was the only (12%) student who cited an ODEP as having a positive impact on her preparedness for college. Felicia perceived her transition to college to be a little easier because the ODEP "helped me learn how to do research and write papers." She was able to apply those research skills to several of her college courses.

Subtheme 7: Note taking. Sofia obtained note taking skills from the ODEPs that she completed. When Sofia transitioned to college, she questioned "how do I take notes on my own and when I listen to a lecture, what are the key points I need to get out of it?" She attributed her ability to take notes successfully to the ODEP she completed.

Subtheme 8: Exam taking. In addition to note taking, Sofia was the only participant (12%) who cited the exam taking skills that she gained from completing an ODEP. Prior to her first exam in college, she wondered "how to take exams - How do I take them during a time?" She believed that her ODEPs prepared her to take exams because several were online and there was a time limit for completing them. Without the

skills gained from an ODEP, even if she still encountered other issues, Sofia believed she would not have made it through her first year of college.

Students were able to build certain skills by completing an ODEP in high school. Particularly, writing, time management, and help seeking skills. Students perceived these skills as having a positive impact on their college preparedness. Some students still had difficulty in many other areas when transitioning to college that they believed an ODEP did not prepare them for. Students did perceive ODEPs as providing them with a glimpse of what college would be and recommend it to other high school students.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided a discussion of the lived experiences and perceptions of eight college students who completed an ODEP while in high school. Discussions are relevant to the study's research question of how these students perceived the impact that the ODEP had on their preparation for college. Three core themes of 1) adapting to college culture, 2) ODEPs as a positive stepping stone, and 3) skills gained from ODEPs emerged.

An overview of the recruitment and data collection processes, problem statement, interview questions and objectives, and an analysis of the data and initial findings was presented in Chapter 4. The purpose of the analysis was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP, while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. The initial findings presented in Chapter 4 are interpreted in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 details the study's conclusions, significance to leadership and education, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness. A qualitative method was appropriate for this study because the phenomenon occurred in its natural environment and portrayed the problem in a multifaceted manner (Leedy & Ormrod, 2009). Phenomenology was appropriate for this study because it focuses on the experiences of individuals and their interpretation of the world (Hammersley, 2004). Phenomenological researchers do not attempt to explain individuals' experiences, but instead describe those lived experiences (Adams & Manen, 2008; Hammersley, 2004); Van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011). A phenomenological approach allowed students to describe their lived experiences in an ODEP and perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to their college preparedness (Adams & Manen, 2008; Hammersley, 2004); Van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011). The findings and interpretations of those findings are presented in this chapter.

Throughout the study, data analysis and reduction continued both manually and with the assistance of NVivo 10. Initially, 470 expressions relevant to the experience were identified. Through extensive reduction and elimination, 19 invariant constituents remained. Three core themes emerged after the remaining 19 invariant constituents underwent clustering and were thematically labeled. The three core themes related to how completing an ODEP contributed to or impacted students' college preparedness included: 1) adapting to college culture, 2) ODEPs as a positive stepping stone, and 3)

skills gained from ODEPs. Chapter 5 is a reflection on the study that includes an interpretation of the data related to the three core themes. Additionally, Chapter 5 summarizes the results, addresses limitations, and provides recommendations and avenues for further research.

Interpretations and Implications

This phenomenological study is in line with the literature and research revealing inconsistencies with the implementation of ODEPs and the ability of these programs to increase student achievement (Ganzert, 2012; Shaughnessy, 2009; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Changing the method of delivery from face-to-face to an online environment requires students to become autonomous and self-determined learners (Mitchell, 2012; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). The success many students experienced with face-to-face DEPs can vary greatly with ODEPs, and research is insufficient to determine if students receive the same degree of preparedness from ODEPs (Mitchell, 2012; Muhammad, 2011; Ozmun, 2013). The inconsistencies and lack of research on ODEPs interrupt the college preparedness of students and falsely may equip them with a sense of preparedness. Students in this study believed they were prepared for the demands of college. Students interviewed agreed ODEPs equipped them with skills that contributed to their college preparedness, but there were several unexpected challenges for which the students were not prepared. These challenges impacted their confidence and academic success during the first year of college. For some students, their success was stifled when they failed classes or had to change their majors. Many of these unexpected challenges were a result of taking a college course in a high school setting without the face-to-face interaction with other college students and professors.

The objective of the study was to collect data from college students in Ohio who completed an ODEP while in high school. The study's design intended to produce valuable information from students regarding their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes of ODEPs. The overarching goal of the study was to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of how student experiences in an ODEP impacted their college preparedness. Patterns and themes emerged from the sample of eight students. The findings from the data analysis of the transcripts indicated that students had a difficult transition adapting to the culture of college, but believed that ODEPs were a positive stepping stone and equipped them with certain skills that helped them to succeed in the long run.

Theme 1: Adapting to college culture. The first core theme of adapting to college culture was determined from six invariant constituents or subthemes referenced during the in-depth interviews. The subthemes are fundamental to the first theme and included: 1) different expectations (8 out of 8 participants; 100%), 2) a harder workload, including a faster pace and more challenging content (7 out of 8 participants; 87%), 3) finding balance (7 out of 8 participants, 87%), 4) being self-reliant (6 out of 8 participants; 75%), 5) paying for an education (5 out of 8 participants; 62%), and 6) following a syllabus (1 out of 8 participants; 12 %). When students arrived to college, they realized they had a much smaller role in college than they did in high school. College was described as a “big eye opener” and adapting to several key aspects of college culture proved to be difficult for each student. The following subthemes reveal areas for which students believed ODEPs were preparing them for college, but instead, students transitioned to college overconfident about their level of preparedness.

Subtheme 1: Different expectations. Students may arrive to college academically prepared because they completed more rigorous courses on high school, but often time students need some form of remediation because they did not understand everything they would need to do to be successful (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014). The lack of knowing what is expected and needed to succeed affects many students, especially those who are first generation college students (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014). Reflecting on her first semester in college, Danica stated, “I didn't really know what to do so that made it tough.”

Foote, Schulkind, and Shapiro (2015) referenced the ACT as a test to measure a student’s level of college readiness. Unfortunately, the ACT provides information on certain aspects of college readiness, but many students fail to read and interpret those results (Foote, Schulkind, & Shapiro, 2015). Luciana took an ODEP and several advanced classes in high school, but believed that the expectations were lowered and she was not prepared to perform well on tests like the ACT. Regardless of the low score she received on the ACT, she thought college would be as easy as the ODEP she completed in high school. She quickly realized that the college expectations were much different than high school and she was “thrown off guard.” Students in this study were not prepared for the expectations, especially, the harder workload they encountered.

Subtheme 2: Harder workload. Numerous students arrive at colleges every year and are unprepared for the intensity and pace of college work (Jackson & Kurlaender, 2014). Jackson and Kurlaender (2014) described being prepared to do college-level work as the most critical factor of achieving success in college. Students in this study described the college coursework as “challenging,” “way different,” “extreme,” and

“difficult.” The length of the college courses were very different and the professors moved through the content much faster than in high school. In high school, students had the same courses all year long, but in college that content was condensed into a semester. Six of the eight students failed at least one class during their first year of college, seven students had low GPAs their first year, and three students changed their majors to a field that they believed they could handle. After completing an ODEP in high school, the students believed they could handle a full course load and still perform well if they put in the effort. Danica and Fabiana realized they took too many classes and could not handle the advanced content the same way they handled an ODEP.

Fabiana felt like she was at a disadvantage because of the education she received in high school. After reviewing her high school transcripts, Fabiana’s college advisors also thought she could handle a full course load. Fabiana stated, “I shouldn't listen to my advisors because I took a lot of math and science my first year college and you're not really supposed to do that just because it's going to be really difficult.” The students in the study were only able to complete one ODEP during a school year. The ODEP was in addition to their regular high school classes and was completed online. Students did not consider the fact that they would take multiple college-level courses in college and have more of a hands-on approach in certain subjects. The pace and demands of these college classes continued to challenge the students throughout their first year of college.

Subtheme 3: Finding balance. Students described college as “bigger” and found it difficult to find balance. This was a challenge that affected each student differently, and they did not believe completing an ODEP helped them. All students found it difficult to balance their academics with their social life. Although Felicia was able to separate

her academic and social lives, she found herself getting into situations where she “didn’t think or didn’t want to think.”

Tierney and Sablan (2014) revealed that students fail to earn a college degree for several reasons including engaging other students and faculty. Involvement in the classroom is particularly critical during the first year of college (Tinto, 1997, 2007). Tinto (1997, 2007) believed that classroom involvement is a vital element because it is the once place where a majority of involvement occurs with members of the same institution. Research has shown that classrooms shape student persistence, but few studies have revealed how (Tinto, 1997). In college, the study’s students found difficulty trying to become involved in the classroom and social scene in college. For some students, it was easy to make friends and find study partners in the classroom, but they neglected their academics. For other students, they spent more time focusing on their academics and were miserable without any social life. Prioritizing was difficult for students, primarily because they were on their own and had no one forcing them to make their academics a top priority.

Involvement is not easy to achieve for students who do not reside or spend time on the college campus, but it correlates to student persistence, especially for students in an urban environment (Tinto, 1997). Increased student involvement and interaction with others within the institution of higher education often results in increased persistence and graduation rates (Tinto, 2007). Students who complete an ODEP are not experiencing the physical involvement and interaction with others in an IHE (Muhammad, 2011). Students who completed ODEPs did not have any involvement or opportunities to spend time on a college campus so they did not know what to expect. Secondary and

postsecondary institutions need to commit to the resources needed and confront the fundamental issues that embolden student persistence (Tinto, 2007). Exposing students to the college culture early on is beneficial and provides a personal experience (Foote, Schulkind, & Shapiro, 2015). It also goes beyond what students see on TV or in movies. Many students in this study based their initial perceptions of college on what they saw in TV or in movies. Providing opportunities to have a presence on a college campus could also help students understand their role and expectations.

Subtheme 4: Self-Reliant. Cohen (2012) revealed that successful students are self-determined and self-regulate. Students who possess self-regulation can self-reflect, self-monitor, self-evaluate, and have strong metacognitive skills (Cohen, 2012). Self-regulated learners have an interest in the material they learn, are prepared to ask questions when they do not understand, and are motivated to learn (Cohen, 2012). In high school, students were accustomed to teachers that pushed them and sought after them if they were failing or missing assignments. Milena summed it up perfectly when she said, ODEPs “needed to be more firm as far as making sure they getting us ready for actual college classes like instead of pushing us. You can push us in a different way like okay well you failed this.” Milena, Monica, and Gabriel cited that in college, the professors are not playing games and they will let you fail.

Students in this study found it difficult to take ownership of their learning and adapt a self-directing behavior. Building a student’s ownership of learning is a critical piece to ensure that student is prepared for college (Conley & French, 2014; Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Each student noted that the ODEP courses were lenient in many ways, including allowing students to turn in work past the deadline. Milena and Monica

believed that if a high school student signed up for a college-level course, that student should not expect any leniency. Luciana believed it would be helpful to have a teacher in the room while completing an ODEP to deter cheating, but Monica and Gabriel believed that the high school teacher should not have an active role. It can be difficult to take ownership of learning and develop self-reliant behavior when a teacher is constantly directing you. Luciana summed up her experience by stating,

I guess it just made me feel like it affected me like positively for the whole college credit thing, but I guess it also showed me that it kind of made me have a little kind of confidence. With a little more confidence going into college because I was just thinking that if this is how college is, college is easy, like what are people talking about? Because the college courses [ODEPs] I was taking were really easy. So I kind of walked into undergrad thinking it was going to be similar to that.

Students soon realized that college was not similar to high school, nor the ODEPs that they completed, and now they were paying for an education.

Subtheme 5: Paying for education. Paying for education was something all students anticipated, but they did not realize they would be responsible for additional course materials and that failing a course could harm them in various ways. Although Gabriel had a positive attitude about his first year in college and did not comment about the costs associated with college, he did reveal that he performed poorly which caused him to lose some of the funding he was receiving. When students participated in ODEPs, they could perform poorly and with no consequences as long as they received a passing grade. Milena stressed the importance of planning and wished she had planned better for

the upfront costs that her scholarship did not cover. Being prepared to plan for college would have helped her in several areas, including following a syllabus.

Subtheme 6: Following a syllabus. Although this issue only arose with one student, following a college syllabus can be difficult for many students. A college syllabus can be used as a learning and teaching tool, but this is often overlooked by those that create and use them (Fornaciari & Dean, 2014). According to Fornaciari and Dean (2014), syllabi have become less informational and more of an in-depth contractual agreement. Hirsch (2010) believed that professors should use what she referred to as the Promising Syllabus. The Promising Syllabus is learner-centered and establishes a series of promises with the teacher that encourage the learner to take ownership. Several students found it difficult to become self-reliant and take ownership, so establishing a syllabus to build self-efficacy could help students in numerous ways. Through all of the challenges encountered during their first year of college, students still recommend ODEPs as a great option to prepare students for college.

Theme 2: ODEPs as a positive stepping stone. With all of the challenges encountered during the first year of college, students continue to perceive ODEPs as a positive stepping stone. The second core theme of ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone was determined from five invariant constituents or subthemes referenced during the in-depth interviews. The subthemes are fundamental to the second theme and included: 1) exposure to college including the workload and expectations (8 out of 8 participants; 100%), 2) ODEPs as a good experience or opportunity (7 out of 8 participants; 87%), 3) ODEPs helping to prepare (6 out of 8 participants; 75%), 4) earning college credit (4 out of 8 participants; 50%), and 5) ODEPs are free (3 out of 8 participants; 37%). Felicia

stated, “I just think it's like a good stepping stone before you get to college. Like you get college credit and you get experience under your belt.”

Subtheme 1: Exposure to college. All eight students who participated in the study believed ODEPs had a positive impact on their transition to college because they were exposed to college. The exposure could have been more on par with college expectations, but several students, like Sofia, believed they would have had “even less of an idea” of what they needed to do to succeed had they not completed an ODEP. Completing an ODEP was able to give them a “glimpse” of what they may encounter in college and in a way helped them realize the expectations. Teachers often stressed the importance of deadlines and behaviors that are expected in college, but students were not held to those expectations in high school, so they did not internalize them. When students encountered difficult situations in college, they often reflected back on their experience with an ODEP.

Subtheme 2: Good experience or opportunity. Only one student did not perceive completing an ODEP as a good experience. She was at the top of her class in high school and overconfident when she entered college, primarily because of the ease and success she had with ODEPs. The other seven students believed completing an ODEP was a good experience and opportunity because it gave them a different perspective than their peers and eased many of their fears about college. For Gabriel, he was not considering going to college until he was given the opportunity to take an ODEP. That opportunity motivated him and began preparing him to become a college student.

Subtheme 3: Helps to prepare. Completing ODEPs did not completely prepare students for the transition to college and the issues they would meet, but it did help with

their preparation. Students gained certain skills and were exposed to coursework that was different from the high school courses their peers were completing. Additionally, students were able to work with a variety of professors that had varying expectations. With some changes to ODEPs, these programs could ensure students are prepared in most aspects of college.

Subtheme 4: Earned college credit. Completing ODEPs in high school allowed students to earn college credit for free. Students have the opportunity to earn two years' worth of college credits toward a bachelor's degree and many students are able to enter college as a sophomore (DiMaria, 2013). Students continue to recommend ODEPs because if they performed well, they received college credit for free. Luciana felt good about being ahead of her peers in at least one way because she had already received credit and was able to take the courses she needed to complete her degree in four years. She stated, "it was helpful in the sense that it got some of my college classes out of the way, I mean I got credit so that was obviously the best outcome from taking post-secondary classes."

Subtheme 5: Free. The costs associated with attending a college campus was also something that surprised most students in the study. Students did not realize the costs associated with college, including books and supplies, and were thankful to have the opportunity to earn college credit free of any costs. Students may have encountered certain setbacks when they transitioned to college, but earning free college credit through an ODEP helped to ensure that they those setbacks would not completely derail their success. Students were given a glimpse of what college could be, and may not have been

prepared in every aspect, but there were certain skills that they gained from ODEPs that made their transition to college a little smoother.

Theme 3: Skills gained from ODEPs. As revealed in Chapter 4, students gained several skills from completing an ODEP that contributed to their college preparedness. The third and final core theme of skills gained from ODEPs was determined from eight invariant constituents or subthemes referenced during the in-depth interviews. The subthemes are fundamental to the third theme and included the following skills: 1) time management (8 out of 8 participants; 100%), 2) writing (6 out of 8 participants; 75%), 3) help seeking (4 out of 8 participants; 50%), 4) studying (3 out of 8 participants; 37%), 5) reading (2 out of 8 participants; 25%), 6) research (1 out of 8 participants; 12%), 7) note taking (1 out of 8 participants; 12%), and 8) exam taking (1 out of 8 participants; 12%). Although those skills are specific to certain elements of being a college student, each student believed these skills contributed to their preparedness for college.

Subtheme 1: Time management. Time management is critical to a student's academic preparedness (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). When students explored their experiences in an ODEP, they each revealed that ODEPs helped them to understand how to manage their time. Although the students claimed completing an ODEP helped them develop their time management skills, each student struggled to find balance in college. When they spoke of time management, they were discussing the ability to know how much time is needed to complete an assignment or conduct research for a paper. The amount of time students needed to dedicate to studying, socializing, or working was not something learned in an ODEP. Students continued having difficulty managing time in

other areas and it was a learning process for many students to understand that college professors have strict deadlines.

Subtheme 2: Writing. Each student attributed their college-level writing skills to completing an ODEP. For some students, they understood the importance of citing sources while others learned how to structure papers. Danica and Felicia were overwhelmed when they encountered their first writing assignment in college, but quickly recalled the skills developed in their ODEPs. The overwhelming feeling subsided when each student realized they had the skills necessary to complete the assignment and meet the requirements set forth by their professors.

Subtheme 3: Help seeking. Completing ODEPs failed to prepare students to manage time in all areas, but the ODEPs did help students seek help when they were struggling. What students did learn from trying to manage their time, was that they would need to seek help from professors if they were struggling with the content or deadlines. During their ODEPs, students were required to email their ODEP professors to discuss grades on their assignments and obtain feedback. Although asking for assistance and seeking help from professors during ODEPs was common, seeking help from professors in a face-to-face environment was different. Several students found college professors intimidating in the face-to-face environment. Monica realized that college professors are there to help you and they are willing, but students need to take the initiative. Once the students became more comfortable in their role in college, they were able to seek help and knew the questions to ask to receive the appropriate help. Perhaps, students would have been better prepared to begin seeking help if they had the opportunity to speak to ODEP professors face-to-face.

Subtheme 4: Studying. The more time students spend on academic activities, the more learning occurs (McCormick, 2011). According to McCormick (2011), when students study alone and without multitasking, their academic performance improves. For three students, ODEPs equipped them with studying skills that eased their transition to college.

Subtheme 5: Reading. Two students perceived ODEPs as positively impacting their college preparedness. Through ODEPs, they learned to read beyond basic comprehension and were able to read and understand what they were reading. Alharbi (2015) believed that reading is complex and students, particularly college students, need to understand vocabulary and be able to relate what is read to prior knowledge. Students in the study took a variety of ODEPs and their activities varied. Because Milena and Sofia took ODEPs that focused on reading, their reading skills were developed.

Subtheme 6: Research. Similar to subthemes seven and eight, research skills were only cited by one student who interviewed. Felicia believed learning how to conduct research for papers made her transition to college a little easier. With only 12% of participants obtaining research skills from an ODEP, this is a vital skill to have in college and ODEPs were not preparing most students to conduct research.

Subtheme 7: Note taking. Williams and Eggert (2002) believed that note taking was pivotal in helping college students integrate content from lectures. Sofia believed that her ODEPs helped her develop her note taking skills, but no other students who interviewed mentioned note taking skills. Many students enter college without knowing how to take notes and capture what is important, and ODEPs are not equipping all students with these skills (Williams & Eggert, 2002).

Subtheme 8: Exam taking. Sofia was also the only student who attributed her exam taking skills to the ODEPs that she completed. This was because one of her ODEPs had exams that were completed online and monitored by a teacher in the room. Fabiana and Luciana did not have someone in the room monitoring their ODEPs that allowed them to cheat on exams. Gabriel had a high school adjunct in the room, but she was lenient on students and allowed them additional time on exams and other assignments. This subtheme revealed a major inconsistency with ODEPs and another reason why students were not prepared for college-level expectations.

Historically, being prepared for college meant having skills in reading, writing, and math (Conley & French, 2014). This content knowledge may be necessary but it is not sufficient to succeed in college (Conley & French, 2014). College preparedness covers much more than the academics and includes understanding behaviors and the context of college (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Students in this study believed they were prepared for college after completing an ODEP, and encountered several unexpected challenges during their first year of college. Ultimately, they believed they would have been completely unsuccessful without the exposure and skills gained from ODEPs.

Summary of Findings

Results correspond with recent studies raising concerns about student preparedness and an oversight of the curriculum covered in DEPs (Ozmun, 2013; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Dual enrollment programs have had positive effects on students' persistence in and the decision to attend an IHE, but a lack of evidence revealing if these programs, specifically the online programs, enhance student learning or adequately prepare students remains an apprehension (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ganzert, 2012;

Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Leaders and proponents of ODEPs believe that these programs are helping students reach postsecondary studies, and although some benefits of DEPs are undeniable, there is a lack of research on ODEPs (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Harris & Stovall, 2013; Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Reisberg, 1998; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Whissemore, 2012). Results of several studies found that students who completed DEPs on a college campus reaped a greater benefit than students who were not on a campus (DiRienzo & Lilly, 2014; Ozmun, 2013; Whissemore, 2012). Analysis of data derived from the transcribed interviews, with eight participants, confirmed that although students had different experiences in college, every student found it difficult to adapt to the college culture in a face-to-face environment.

Dual enrollment programs tend to outperform other college readiness initiatives like AP and IRB, but students in online dual enrollment programs are not prepared for many aspects of college that hinder success (Blume & Zumeta, 2014). The definition of college ready can vary from high school to college and from state to state (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Understanding college readiness across different states is difficult because of a lack of data (Blume & Zumeta, 2014; Bragg & Taylor, 2014). According to Conley and French (2014), to be prepared to have success in college, students need cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills. Offering students opportunities to explore and immerse themselves in college culture can help students understand college and what they need to do to be successful (Schaefer, 2014).

In the United States, less than 60% of students obtain a four-year degree in four years, and almost half of incoming college students require a remedial course (Tierney & Sablan, 2014). Preparing students to be ready for college and implementing a more aligned preschool to college approach is a major theme in education reform (Blume & Zumeta, 2014). College preparedness is a constant concern for leaders and other stakeholders in education (Bragg & Taylor, 2014; Tierney & Sablan, 2014). The study's findings reveal that students lack content knowledge in certain areas, but ultimately students lack an understanding of college culture. Conley and French (2014) believed this was because students do not understand that their role in college is different from that in high school and they lack transition knowledge and skills.

Responses to Core Research Question

This study focused on one research question to explore students' experiences with an ODEP, and their perceptions of how completing an ODEP contributed to or hindered college preparedness. The research question guided this qualitative, phenomenological study: How do college students, who completed an online dual enrollment program while in high school, perceive the impact that the ODEP had on preparation for college? This section provides an answer to the study's research question based on the data collected, analysis, and interpretations from the in-depth interviews. The three core themes and 11 subthemes served to answer the research question. The answers reveal positive and negative impacts completing an ODEP had on the students' preparation for college. Where appropriate, previous research on ODEPs is included to support the findings.

Findings from this study reveal that students were not prepared adequately for the transition to college, although they were graduated from high school believing ODEPs

were providing them with an authentic college experience. These inadequacies created several obstacles for the students and reveal areas in which ODEPs can be improved to ensure students are reaping the same benefits as students who complete DEPs on a college campus. These programs have the potential to expose students to college expectations and knowledge while offering them the chance to enroll in more interesting classes, but the online programs do not offer opportunities to experience campus life (Cassidy et al., 2010; Muhammad, 2011; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). Aside from the negative impact on preparation for college, students also perceived ODEPs as having positive impacts on their preparation. Table 10 displays the negative and positive impacts that ODEPs had on students' preparation for college, along with the supporting themes and subthemes that answer the study's research question.

Table 10

Perceived Positive and Negative Impacts of ODEPs on Preparation for College

| | Supporting Themes | Supporting Subthemes | # of Students Supporting Subthemes | % of Students Supporting Subthemes |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Negative Impact on Students' Preparation for College | Theme 1: Adapting to College Culture | Subtheme 1: Different Expectations | 8 | 100% |
| | | Subtheme 2: Harder Workload | 7 | 87% |
| | | Subtheme 3: Finding Balance | 7 | 87% |
| | | Subtheme 4: Self-Reliant | 6 | 75% |
| Positive Impact on Students' Preparation for College | Theme 2: ODEPs as a Positive Stepping Stone | Subtheme 1: Exposure to College | 8 | 100% |
| | | Subtheme 2: ODEPs as a Good Experience or Opportunity | 7 | 87% |
| | | Subtheme 3: ODEPs Help to Prepare | 6 | 75% |
| | | Subtheme 4: Earned College Credit | 4 | 50% |
| | Theme 3: Skills Gained from ODEPs | Subtheme 1: Time Management | 8 | 100% |
| | | Subtheme 2: Writing | 6 | 75% |

Negative impact on preparation. Dual enrollment programs have had positive effects on students' persistence in and the decision to attend an IHE, but there is a lack of evidence and research about ODEPs revealing if these programs enhance student learning or adequately prepare students (Ganzert, 2012; Mitchell, 2011; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). A major finding of this study revealed that students perceived ODEPs as preparing them for college, but in many ways, they were not prepared and overly confident. These findings emerged from this study and not the literature on ODEPs. Students interviewed perceived ODEPs as preparing them to meet college expectations, take on a college

workload, balance academics with their social life, and being self-reliant in a face-to-face college environment.

Positive impact on preparation. Additional findings from this study reveal the positive impact ODEPs had on students' preparation for college and are in line with the literature on dual enrollment programs (DEPs). Lukes (2014) discussed several benefits to completing DEPs including better academic performance and obtaining a bachelor's degree in less than four years. Medvide and Blustein (2010) found that DEPs influenced career decisions; positively change their perceptions of college, boosted confidence, and increased time-management and organizational skills. Although the results of this study showed that the boosted confidence was not always a positive thing, students perceived ODEPs as exposing them to college, providing them a good experience, and helping them to prepare for college while developing their time management, writing, and help seeking skills. Bringing DEPs to students' high schools can positively impact the school's culture and provide opportunities for students to experience college (Ellspermann, 2015).

Recommendations

Fabiana believed that ODEPs are "not on the same level" in regards to the pace and workload. Each student who participated in the interviews believed the ODEPs could have been "more strict" and include "more challenging content" to align with the expectations in college. Completing an ODEP meant the students were still in their normal high school environment with high school teachers guiding them through the course. Communicating with their ODEP professors was delayed and impersonal because the only method to communicate was via email. Results of this phenomenological study contribute purposeful insights into ODEPs and preparing

students for the transition from high school to college. Using the findings in this study and the recommendations, key stakeholders in education can take action to improve ODEPs and the transition to college.

Recommendations for key stakeholders. A review of literature, and various secondary educational programs throughout the United States, led Venezia and Jaeger (2013) to conclude that although many students have college aspirations, an ample amount of students enter college lacking the basic skills, knowledge, and behaviors of successful college students. Coupled with decreased interests, an increasing number of students feel alienated and need better support for making informed choices about transitioning into higher education (Hooker & Brand, 2010). The results of this study revealed that ODEPs are not preparing students for the transition to a face-to-face college.

Dual enrollment programs intend to give students a head start on their college experience and to motivate them to pursue higher learning opportunities (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Online dual enrollment programs are a form of distance learning that is accessible, cost-efficient, flexible, and opens learning up to people who may not have had an opportunity to attend a brick and mortar school (Beldarrain, 2006; Harris & Stovall, 2013; Sheeja, 2011). Distance learning has become popular throughout the world and ODEPs continue to expand (Gutierrez, 2010). Leaders and stakeholders in education can improve ODEPs by ensuring they provide students with more relevant experiences and hold them to the same expectations as a regular college student.

High school environments are typically highly structured with a set schedule, teacher assistance, and guided activities (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). High school and college learning environments are very different and programs designed to prepare students for college need to design programs that address these differences (Cooper, 2011; Harris & Stovall, 2013). Expanding ODEPs to include campus visits can help students better prepare for adjusting to the culture of college. Campus visits should include relevant experiences like attending lectures, participating in labs, and interacting with college students and professors.

Students in this study understood that the ODEP was made possible because it was online, but arranging days to experience college is possible. Leaders can begin to work with nearby colleges and universities to create immersion days or weeks for students enrolled in ODEPs. Schaefer (2014) noted the benefits of a college immersion program that allowed students to spend a week on a college campus and experience collegiate activities. Not only did students in Schaefer's (2014) college immersion program experience college and build college knowledge, but they began building college identities and imagining themselves as successful college students.

Academic success in college can depend on what students do in between classes, how well they adhere to their schedules, and their ability to take responsibility for their learning (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Students in this study struggled to take ownership of their learning and balance their academics with a social life. Building self-efficacy is a crucial characteristic that leaders, policymakers, and educators need to begin honing (Conley & French, 2014; Tierney & Sablan, 2014). If key stakeholders in education want to make effective changes with ODEPs, they need to ensure that students in ODEPs are

held to the same expectations. The workload, pace, content, and deadlines need to be a mirror image of what students encounter in college. There is much debate about whether DE students should be treated as adults or receive some of the same accommodations they are accustomed to as high school students (Tinberg & Nadeau, 2011). Students in this study felt as though ODEPs did not allow them to be autonomous learners and develop self-directing behaviors because they were always receiving guidance from their high school teachers.

High school teachers can make a significant contribution to improving ODEPs by allowing students to take ownership. Professors should provide students in ODEPs with a detailed syllabus to ensure that expectations are clear and the high school teachers should not interfere with reminders or extensions on assignments. Syllabi should also be designed to encourage students to take ownership of their learning. If the student has questions or needs assistance, the ODEP professor should be readily available during the class period or designated office hours for students to reach out. With the advances in telecommunication software, students could meet with their professors via programs like Skype to have a face-to-face experience.

Student maturity levels are a major concern for colleges (Wozniak & Palmer, 2013). Online dual enrollment programs were developed to provide students with a college experience from the comfort of their high school campus. If schools and leaders in education want to provide an experience that is relevant and better prepares students for the transition to college, reforms are needed. The information in this study may act as a catalyst to uncover steps schools can take to improve ODEPs and the transition to college, specifically adjusting to the college culture.

Recommendations for further study. This phenomenological study focused on college students who completed an ODEP in high school and their transition to college. Results presented in this study provide insight into the phenomenon and provide students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP impacted their preparation for college. Although students believed completing an ODEP was a positive stepping stone and identified writing, help seeking, and time management skills as the main ways ODEPs impacted their preparedness, there were still several challenges associated with the college culture that students were not prepared for. This study was limited to the sample interviewed and the findings warrant further research.

First, follow-up research can expand on this study and include students from other school districts, particularly suburban and rural districts. Students interviewed gave several suggestions for improving ODEPs from college visits to opportunities to interact with college professors and students. Further research is needed to determine if there are ODEPs providing college immersion weeks as identified in Schaefer's (2014) study. Additional research could also examine students' apprehension to speak to college professors in a face-to-face environment. Further research can also compare the level of preparedness between students who complete ODEPs and traditional DEPs on a college campus.

One student in this study, Felicia, had an easier transition to college than her peers who were interviewed. She is the only student who noted that she kept in contact with her professors from an ODEP. Further studies can include research on students who kept in touch with their ODEP professors and how that contact may have impacted their preparedness. Lastly, although several males met the participant criteria and were

contacted, only one chose to interview. Further studies could focus on and explore the perceptions of males who completed ODEPs and their transition to college.

Conclusion

This study used a qualitative method to extend current studies on DEPs, to include ODEPs, student experiences, and perceptions of how ODEPs are preparing these students for higher education. Chapter 1 introduced the study and the increase of DEPs in the United States. A conceptual framework was provided to put the study in perspective. Additionally, Chapter 1 included the background of the problem and provided a framework for creating knowledge of the phenomenon.

Chapter 2 included a comprehensive literature review containing scholarly research relevant to the topic of dual enrollment, college readiness, student persistence, and transitioning from secondary to postsecondary institutions. The literature review investigated the current literature available to support the research and the barriers to effective dual enrollment. Additionally, Chapter 2 encompassed the history of dual enrollment, conceptual framework, current findings, college readiness research, ODEPs in Ohio, and challenges with ODEPs. The background information, research question, and literature review presented in Chapter 2 provide a foundation for the study's method and design.

Chapter 3 contained a detailed discussion of the researcher's decision for selecting a qualitative method over a quantitative method. Chapter 3 included the appropriateness of the chosen design to answer the research question, a discussion of the population, sample, data collection, and data analysis. The measures taken to increase credibility and transferability were also outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 included a detailed analysis of interviews with eight college students who completed at least one ODEP in high school and transitioned to an IHE. The information presented in Chapter 4 included an explanation of the recruitment and data collection process. Textural and structural descriptions for each participant were also included. An in-depth analysis of the data and how it relates to the research question was presented.

Chapter 5 provided the conclusions and recommendations of this qualitative phenomenological study investigating the lived experiences of college students who completed an ODEP in high school. The three core themes that emerged from this study were adapting to college culture, ODEPs as a positive stepping stone, and skills gained from ODEPs. Leaders and policymakers in education can use the findings from this study and recommendations to continue improving ODEPs and preparing students to transition to college.

Research on students who transitioned into postsecondary education after completing an ODEP is especially sparse because of the advances in online education (Mead, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Willis-Opalenik, 2011). This study provides the perspectives of students who completed an ODEP in high school and transitioned to college. Providing this insight into their lived experiences is critical to the research and policies on preparing students for college. Furthermore, the students in this study completed other college-level courses in high school like AP, IB, and early college, but agreed that ODEPs provided more preparation. Completing ODEPs had positive and negative impacts on the students' preparation for college. Leaders in education can begin

taking the steps necessary to address the negative impacts and ensure students are prepared in a well-rounded manner.

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Appendix A

Solicitation Email

Subject Line: Danielle N. Formen: Research Study Participation Invitation

Email Message Body:

Dear _____,

My name is Danielle Formen and I am a doctoral candidate at University of Phoenix. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that I am conducting for partial fulfillment of the requirements of my degree program. I obtained your email address through a former or current classmate who believed that you would make an excellent contribution to this research study and I look forward to hearing and understanding your opinions.

The purpose of the proposed qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP, while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness.

Participant criteria for this study:

- Enrolled in and completed at least one online dual enrollment (ODE) course while in high school.
- Maintained a cumulative high school grade point average of 2.5 or higher
- Currently attend a four-year college in Ohio (online colleges do not qualify)

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate, not to answer any question, or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

If you are interested in this study and meet the study's participant criteria, please reply to this email with your name, telephone number, email address, and mailing address. You will receive an informed consent form to your mailing address. Please sign it and mail it back to me using the return envelope included. Once I have received your informed consent, you will receive an email with further instructions to schedule and complete your interview.

If you are not interested in the study or do not meet the participant criteria, please reply to this email and simply state "Cannot participate at this time". Please forward this email to any college student that you know who may meet the participant criteria and be interested in completing the study. Please limit this to students who graduated from a high school in the Columbus City School district.

Thank you for your consideration. Please keep this email for your records and ensure Danidagirl@email.phoenix.edu is allowed through your SPAM filter.

Danielle N. Formen

Danidagirl@email.phoenix.edu

If you do not respond to this email, you will be contacted again with this request once per week over the next two weeks.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form for Participants 18 and Older



Dear _____,

My name is Danielle N. Formen and I am a student at the University of Phoenix working on a doctoral degree. I am doing a research study entitled **STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF OHIO ONLINE DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS AND THE INFLUENCE ON COLLEGE PREPAREDNESS**. The purpose of the research study is to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP, while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness.

The study will include approximately 10 participants. Your participation will involve:

- A one-on-one interview, including 12 questions and expected to last 45 minutes.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants will have the opportunity to review and verify the transcriptions.

You can decide to be a part of this study or not. Once you start, you can withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits. The results of the research study may be published but your identity will remain confidential and your name will not be made known to any outside party.

In this research, there are no foreseeable risks to you.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, a possible benefit from your being part of this study is that your responses could help educational leaders develop more effective

ODEPs ensure that students enrolled are receiving benefits equal to their peers enrolled in traditional DEPs. Understanding the results of this study and others, enables policymakers, secondary and postsecondary institutions, administrators, and teachers to develop plans for more effective and consistent online dual enrollment programs.

If you have any questions about the research study, please call me at [REDACTED] or email me at Danidagirl@email.phoenix.edu. For questions about your rights as a study participant, or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board via email at IRB@phoenix.edu.

As a participant in this study, you should understand the following:

1. You may decide not to be part of this study or you may want to withdraw from the study at any time. If you want to withdraw, you can do so without any problems.
2. Your identity will be kept confidential.
3. Danielle Formen, the researcher, has fully explained the nature of the research study and has answered all of your questions and concerns.
4. If interviews are done, they may be recorded. If they are recorded, you must give permission for the researcher, Danielle Formen to record the interviews. You understand that the information from the recorded interviews may be transcribed. The researcher will develop a way to code the data to assure that your name is protected.
5. Data will be kept in a secure and locked area. The data will be kept for three years, and then destroyed.
6. The results of this study may be published.

“By signing this form, you agree that you understand the nature of the study, the possible risks to you as a participant, and how your identity will be kept confidential. When you sign this form, this means that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission to volunteer as a participant in the study that is described here.”

I accept the above terms. I do not accept the above terms. (CHECK ONE)

Signature of the interviewee _____

Date _____

Signature of the researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix C

Non-Disclosure Agreement (3rd Party Transcription)

Appendix C: Non-Disclosure Agreement (3rd Party Transcription)

To be completed before transcription occurs.



University of Phoenix®

Non-Disclosure Agreement

Melissa Abshire acknowledges that in order to provide the services to Danielle Formen (hereinafter "Researcher") who is a researcher in a confidential study with the University of Phoenix, Inc., Melissa Abshire must agree to keep the information obtained as part of its services (as more fully described below) confidential. Therefore the parties agree as follows:

1. The information to be disclosed under this Non-disclosure Agreement ("Agreement") is described as follows and shall be considered "Confidential Information": The digitally recorded interviews including the questions, responses, and participant information. All information shall remain the property of Researcher.
2. Melissa Abshire agrees to keep in confidence and to use the Confidential Information for *transcription only* and for no other purposes.
3. Melissa Abshire further agrees to keep in confidence and not disclose any Confidential Information to a third party or parties for a period of five (5) years from the date of such disclosure. All oral disclosures of Confidential Information as well as written disclosures of the Confidential Information are covered by this Agreement.
4. Melissa Abshire shall upon Researcher's request either destroy or return the Confidential Information upon termination of this Agreement.
5. Any obligation of Melissa Abshire under this Agreement shall not apply to Confidential Information that:
 - a) Is or becomes a part of the public knowledge through no fault of Melissa Abshire;
 - b) Melissa Abshire can demonstrate was rightfully in its possession before disclosure by Researcher/ research subjects; or
 - c) Melissa Abshire can demonstrate was rightfully received from a third party who was not Researcher/research subjects and was not under confidentiality restriction on disclosure and without breach of any nondisclosure obligation.
6. Melissa Abshire agrees to obligate its employees or agents, if any, who have access to any portion of Confidential Information to protect the confidential nature of the Confidential Information as set forth herein.
7. Melissa Abshire shall defend, indemnify and hold the Researcher and the University of Phoenix harmless against any third party claims of damage or injury of any kind resulting from Melissa Abshire use of the Confidential Information, or any violation of by Melissa Abshire of the terms of this Agreement.

8. In the event Melissa Abshire receives a subpoena and believes it has a legal obligation to disclose Confidential Information, then Melissa Abshire will notify Researcher as soon as possible, and in any event at least five (5) business days prior to the proposed release. If Researcher objects to the release of such Confidential Information, Melissa Abshire will allow Researcher to exercise any legal rights or remedies regarding the release and protection of the Confidential Information.
9. Melissa Abshire expressly acknowledges and agrees that the breach, or threatened breach, by it through a disclosure of Confidential Information may cause irreparable harm and that Researcher may not have an adequate remedy at law. Therefore, Melissa Abshire agrees that upon such breach, or threatened breach, Researcher will be entitled to seek injunctive relief to prevent Melissa Abshire from commencing or continuing any action constituting such breach without showing or providing evidence of actual damage.
10. The interpretation and validity of this Agreement and the rights of the parties shall be governed by the laws of the State of Ohio.
11. The parties to this Agreement agree that a copy of the original signature (including an electronic copy) may be used for any and all purposes for which the original signature may have been used. The parties further waive any right to challenge the admissibility or authenticity of this document in a court of law based solely on the absence of an original signature.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, each of the undersigned has caused this Agreement to be duly executed in its name and on its behalf:

Printed Name of Third Party/Vendor: _____ Melissa Abshire _____

Signature:  _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ 5/5/15 _____

Printed Name of Researcher: _____ Danielle Formen _____

Signature:  _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ 5/5/15 _____

Appendix D

Field Test Interview Protocol

After approval by the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board, the following interview protocol will be instituted with the participant:

Opening Script - Hello, my name is Danielle Formen and I am a doctoral candidate at University of Phoenix. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that I am conducting for partial fulfillment of the requirements of my degree program. I am gathering data from college students about their experiences with ODEP in high school. You previously signed the informed consent allowing me to use your responses in my research. You may quit either before, during, or after the data collection and data will be excluded from the study.

Today's interview will take anywhere from 45 minutes to one and a half (1.5) hours to complete. I will write notes during the interview and will voice record your responses to ensure I have verbatim responses. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. The alias, pseudonym, you received will be used to report data for this research study.

Please be as honest and detailed as possible with your responses. To gain clarity or delve further into the experience, I may ask:

- Would you please explain?
- Would you provide an example of that?
- Would you provide more detail?
- Would you clarify?

- How did the experience affect you?
- What changes do you associate with the experience?
- What did you feel?
- What stood out for you?
- Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience?

If you have any questions during the interview, please ask. Thank you in advance for your participation. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Recording will now begin. Do I have your permission to begin recording the interview?

1. Describe your perceptions of college prior to becoming a college student.

Probe: What specific experiences influenced your initial perceptions of college?

Probe: What characteristics of a successful college student stood out to you?

Probe: Describe your feelings about being a successful college student.

Probe: What made you feel that way?

2. Describe your transition from high school to college.

Probe: Describe the challenges, if any, you experienced during the first year of college that you believed might be harmful to your success?

Probe: What made you believe these challenges could be harmful?

Probe: How did experiencing those challenges affect you?

3. Describe your experience with an ODEP.

Probe: What feelings do you associate with your experience in an ODEP?

Probe: How did the experience affect your preparation for college? Can you describe any skills you gained from completing an ODEP?

Probe: Have you shared all that is significant about your experience with an ODEP?

4. Can you give me an example of how an ODEP contributed to your preparation for college?

Probe: Using that experience, what was your immediate reaction?

Probe: Why did you react that way?

Probe: What did you feel?

Probe: Do you have further examples similar to this?

5. Can you give me an example of how an ODEP hindered your preparation for college?

Probe: Using that experience, what was your immediate reaction?

Probe: Why did you react that way?

Probe: What did you feel?

Probe: Do you have further examples similar to this?

6. Describe any adjustments you made to prepare for the academic demands of college during your first year of college.

Probe: Do you believe completing an ODEP helped you adjust to the academic demands?

Probe: Can you provide an example that made you believe completing an ODEP helped you, if it did?

7. Describe any adjustments you made to prepare for the social demands of college during your first year of college.

Probe: Do you believe completing an ODEP helped you adjust to the social demands?

Probe: Can you provide an example that made you believe completing an ODEP helped you, if it did?

8. How would you describe the differences between your current college courses and the ODE courses you completed in high school, if any?
9. How do you perceive the differences in teaching methods between ODEPs and face-to-face college courses?
10. Reflecting on your experiences in an ODEP, what are your perceptions of ODEPs now that you are a college student?
11. What recommendations would you make to improve ODEPs and the transition to a face-to-face college course?
12. Is there anything you wish someone had told you prior to transitioning to a traditional, face-to-face college environment?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Exit Script

Thank you for your participation. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. A transcript of the interview will be sent to you for review and verification of the notes. You can email me at Danidagirl@email.phoenix.edu if you would like to remove yourself from the study and your data will be excluded. Do you have any questions?

Appendix E

Final Interview Protocol

After approval by the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board, the following interview protocol will be instituted with the participants:

Opening Script - Hello, my name is Danielle Formen, a doctoral candidate at University of Phoenix. I am inviting you to participate in a research study that I am conducting for partial fulfillment of the requirements of my degree program. I am gathering data from college students about their experiences with ODEP in high school. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study is to explore and identify college students' perceptions of how completing an ODEP while attending an urban high school in Ohio, contributed to their college preparedness.

I received your signed, informed consent form via mail allowing me to use your responses in my research. You may quit either before, during, or after the data collection and data will be excluded from the study. I appreciate your willingness to engage in the interview.

If you have any questions during the interview, please ask. I will ask a series of questions that you may feel free to answer any way you would like; there are no incorrect answers. I will write notes during the interview and will voice record your responses to ensure I have accurately captured your responses. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. The alias, pseudonym, you received will be used to report data for this research study.

Thank you in advance for your participation. I anticipate the interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin? If you have any questions later, you may contact me by email: Danidagirl@email.phoenix.edu

Recording will now begin. Do I have your permission to begin recording the interview?

1. Describe your perceptions of college prior to becoming a college student?

Probe: What specific experiences influenced your initial perceptions of college?

Probe: What characteristics of a successful college student stood out to you?

Probe: How did you feel about your ability to be a successful college student?

Probe: What made you feel that way?

2. Describe your transition from high school to college?

Probe: What challenges, if any, did you experience during the first year of college that you believed might be harmful to your success?

Probe: What made you believe these challenges could be harmful?

Probe: How did experiencing those challenges affect you?

3. Describe your experience with an ODEP?

Probe: What feelings do you associate with your experience in an ODEP?

Probe: How did the experience affect your preparation for college? Can you describe any skills you gained from completing an ODEP?

Probe: Have you shared all that is significant about your experience with an ODEP?

4. Can you give me an example of how an ODEP helped to shape your preparation for college?

Probe: Using that experience, what was your immediate reaction?

Probe: Why did you react that way?

Probe: What did you feel?

Probe: Do you have further examples similar to this?

5. Can you give me an example of how an ODEP altered your preparation for college? If at all?

Probe: Using that experience, what was your immediate reaction?

Probe: Why did you react that way?

Probe: What did you feel?

Probe: Do you have further examples similar to this?

6. What adjustments, if any, did you make to prepare for the academic demands of college during your first year of college?

Probe: Do you believe completing an ODEP helped you adjust to the academic demands?

Probe: Can you provide an example that made you believe completing an ODEP helped you, if it did?

7. Reflecting on your social role in college, how did that differ from your social role in high school?

Probe: Do you believe completing an ODEP helped you adjust to the social demands?

Probe: Can you provide an example that made you believe completing an ODEP helped you, if it did?

8. What are the differences between your current college courses and the ODE courses you completed in high school, if any?
9. How do you perceive the differences in teaching methods between ODEPs and face-to-face college courses?
10. Reflecting on your experiences in an ODEP, what are your perceptions of ODEPs now that you are a college student?
11. What recommendations would you make to improve ODEPs and the transition to a face-to-face college course?
12. What information do you feel would have been helpful for you prior to transitioning to a traditional, face-to-face college environment?

Exit Script

Thank you for your participation. Please be assured that your responses will be kept confidential. A transcript of the interview will be sent to you for review and verification of the notes. You can email me at Danidagirl@email.phoenix.edu if you would like to

remove yourself from the study and your data will be excluded. Do you have any questions?

Additional Probes

To gain clarity or delve further into the experience, additional probes will be used as needed.

- Would you please explain?
- Would you provide an example of that?
- Would you provide more detail?
- Would you clarify?
- How did the experience affect you?
- What changes do you associate with the experience?
- What did you feel?
- What stood out for you?
- Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience?

Appendix F

Interview Questions and Objectives

The following interview questions (IQs) were asked to obtain the data needed to answer the study's research question of how college students, who completed an online dual enrollment program while in high school, perceived the impact that the ODEP had on their preparation for college.

Interview question 1. Describe your perceptions of college prior to becoming a college student. The main objective of this question was to determine how students perceived college prior to becoming a college student. Probing questions included their influences on their initial perceptions of college, their perceptions of a successful college student, and how they felt about their ability to be a successful college student. Understanding these initial perceptions would help to understand better each student's background and perceived level of preparedness for college.

Interview question 2. Describe your transition from high school to college. It was important to understand each participant's transition to college. Probing questions encompassed the challenges students experienced during their first year of college, the reasons they believed those challenges would be harmful to their success, and how experiencing those challenges affected them. The literature on dual enrollment programs is lacking perceptions and experiences from students who transitioned to college.

Interview question 3. Describe your experience with an ODEP. Research on online dual enrollment programs in the United States is lacking. The objective of this question was to understand students' experiences in an ODEP. Additional probes included the

feelings associated with their ODEP, how that experience affected their preparation for college, the skills gained from the ODEP, and all information that was significant to their experience in an ODEP.

Interview question 4. Can you give me an example of how an ODEP helped to shape your preparation for college? The research question sought to understand the impact ODEPs had on a student's preparation for college. This question asked for a specific example or an experience of how that ODEP helped to prepare the student. Students were then probed to understand their immediate reaction to their experience, why they reacted that way, and what they felt during that experience. Each participant was asked for additional, similar examples.

Interview question 5. Can you give me an example of how an ODEP altered your preparation for college? If at all? Question five sought to understand if the students had to alter their preparation for college after completing an ODEP. It was important to understand if their level of preparedness was enhanced or hindered after completing an ODEP. Students were probed to understand their immediate reaction to their experience, why they reacted that way, and what they felt during that experience. Each student was asked for additional, similar examples.

Interview question 6. What adjustments, if any, did you make to prepare for the academic demands of college during your first year of college? Question six required students to reflect on the academic demands during their first year of college. The first year, or first semester, of college is a significant transitional period for students. Students were asked if they believed completing an ODEP helped them adjust to the academic demands and to provide an example of how the ODEP helped, if at all.

Interview question 7. Reflecting on your social role in college, how did that differ from your social role in high school? In an ODEP, students complete college courses online and are removed from the social aspects of college. The objective of question seven was to understand the differences between the students' social role in high school and in college. Students were then asked if they believed completing an ODEP helped them adjust to the social demands of college, and if so, they were asked to provide an example.

Interview question 8. What are the differences between your current college courses and the ODE courses you completed in high school, if any? The objective of question eight was to understand the differences between the students' college courses and the ODE course completed in high school. Students were asked to reflect on their ODE courses and compare them to their current college courses. Students were asked to look beyond the online format and focus on the expectations, requirements, pace, and academics.

Interview question 9. How do you perceive the differences in teaching methods between ODEPs and face-to-face college courses? Although in an online environment, in question nine, students were asked to discuss the differences in the teaching methods between ODEPs and their face-to-face college courses. The ODEPs are completed online, but in a high school classroom with a high school teacher in the room. Students were asked to reflect on their interaction with professors and any high school teachers in the room during any ODE course.

Interview question 10. Reflecting on your experiences in an ODEP, what are your perceptions of ODEPs now that you are a college student? Students reflected on their experiences in ODEPs now that they are college students. After responding to the

previous questions, students had reflected on several experiences within ODEPs and their transition to college. Understanding if students changed their perceptions of ODEPs after becoming college students was vital to understanding the impact of ODEPs on a student's preparation for college.

Interview question 11. What recommendations would you make to improve ODEPs and the transition to a face-to-face college course? The eight students for the study completed at least one ODEP while in high school and transitioned to a face-to-face college environment. Question 11 sought recommendations for improving ODEPs from the perspective of the students who experienced the phenomenon. Additionally, this question helps to reveal certain shortfalls of ODEPs that the students may not have mentioned earlier during the interviews.

Interview question 12. What information do you feel would have been helpful for you prior to transitioning to a traditional, face-to-face college environment? Question 12 asked students what information would have been helpful for them to know prior to transitioning to a face-to-face college environment. The question was very open and enabled the students to share information that they may have held back from the previous questions. Furthermore, students were asked if there was anything else they wanted to add and if they had shared all that was significant to their experiences.

Appendix G

Textural-Structural Descriptions

Students who participated in the in-depth interviews completed a form of an ODEP in high school. For all but one student, that came in the form of a post-secondary enrollment options (PSEO) course. Although each participant described their transition to college as having many challenges, each participant believed that the ODEP they completed in high school did help to prepare them for college. The ODEPs did not prepare them in every aspect, but reflecting on their lived experiences, every participant could identify several benefits of completing an ODEP. Below, the textural and structural descriptions depict the essences of the students' lived experiences and verbatim examples from the transcripts.

The textural-structural descriptions for the students reveal the meanings and essences that they attach to their experiences with an ODEP and the transition to college. With the difficulties transitioning to college, students remained grateful to have the opportunity to complete an ODEP in high school. The ODEPs were not able to prepare students for all facets of college, but students were given a glimpse into the material and a level of confidence that made them believe they could be successful in college.

Danica believed that college was going to be hard and she would spend most of her days in class. She was successful in high school, which made her confident in her ability to be a successful college student, because she believed college would be the next level up. Danica's transition to college was hard. Although she was accustomed to hard work, the length of the classes and trying to adjust to a college schedule was very

different from high school. In high school, Danica was able to take 7 to 8 classes each day, but taking too many classes her first semester in college caused her to have a bad GPA. The amount of time she had to spend studying in college was certainly not what she expected.

Danica enjoyed her experience with an ODEP in high school and believed the course helped to get her ready for college work while improving her writing skills. She stated PSEO, “was hard at times because it was like, I had one of my professors my senior year, she was like really mean and it gets you used to how college professors are, some of them. They’re not as lenient as high school professors and you have to work way harder”. Danica believed completing PSEO was a good and positive experience, but she wished the program would have gone a step further to help her with her transition to college. She was not prepared for the amount of work and time spent studying in college.

Fabiana was one of two valedictorians in high school and weeks away from her college graduation when interviewed. She believed college was going to be hard, different from high school, and would require her to depend on herself. Coming from an inner city high school, Fabiana was not comfortable about her ability to be a successful college student because she felt like her high school teachers babied her and she was at a disadvantage going into college. She said her high school teachers, “sometimes just give you like a good grade or do what they can to like make sure that you get the grade that you want and that's not the same thing in college where you're just expected to be the best and they're expecting the best out of you”. Reflecting on her first year in college, Fabiana revealed how difficult her transition was. She overloaded on classes, struggled

to find balance, found college professors were not lenient, and she had to “learn the hard way”.

Fabiana’s experience with an ODEP was easy and not much different from her regular high school courses. The work did not require much more effort, but Fabiana still wanted to strive for the best and challenge herself because she would receive college credit for completing PSEO. Fabiana wished that the ODEP would have been more rigorous and pushed her “to think outside of the box”, but she challenged herself because she wanted to “prove that I could like handle a college level course”. Fabiana believed she could have benefited more from PSEO if she had the opportunity to hear from real college students and “their experiences from all different aspects versus like hearing stuff for my teacher who went to college like 15 years ago”. Although Fabiana heard about college from her professor and high school teachers, she wanted to hear from people closer to her age with whom she could relate.

Felicia did not know what to expect going into college. She didn’t think it was going to be easy or hard, but she felt like it was going to be an experience for her to explore and get to know herself. Instead, Felicia found herself getting into trouble. Felicia was “iffy” about her ability to be a successful college student, but believed if she kept her study habits from high school, that she could be successful. She was very studious in high school and had her priorities straight. Felicia was quiet and kept to herself when she first transitioned to college. This enabled her to separate her academics from her social life in college, which led to a smooth transition to college.

Felicia enjoyed her experience with an ODEP, had positive feelings, and was very excited to discuss her experience. Unlike the other interviewees, Felicia remained in

contact with her professor from the PSEO course she took. Although Felicia still had overwhelming feelings when reflecting on her transition to college, she believed the ODEP she completed helped her get her foot in the door so she “wouldn't be so surprised when I got to my first [college] class and I wasn't clueless”. It was evident from the interview that Felicia was an enthusiastic advocate for PSEO.

If she had the chance to be on a college campus prior to transitioning, she feels like she would have had the opportunity to get into conversations with real college students and “learn firsthand what they go through”. The opportunity to be on a college campus would have allowed her to have face-to-face time with professors and Felicia believes that would have been a better opportunity. Felicia was hopeful that her PSEO professor held her to the same expectations as their other college students, but feels like the PSEO professor did take it easy on the high school students. After completing her second year of college, Felicia would love to have the chance to speak to high school seniors about the transition to college. Her experiences made her realize that college is “not a game. You're paying for an education and you don't want to go there and mess up, and unfortunately some people do”.

Gabriel had completed his first year of college when interviewed. He is very intelligent and knew that college was going to be more work than high school, but he believed he was prepared enough because he “took high school seriously enough”. Gabriel believed he was prepared for college and had no trouble fitting in and finding others to work with, which made his transition “real smooth”. He believed he was able to be successful, but found the amount of free time led to him doing “a lot of dumb stuff” instead of paying attention and studying. That amount of free time to focus on other

things was detrimental to his success that first year. A detriment he is still trying to recover from.

Gabriel had a good experience in PSEO and was given “a small taste of what it would be like in college”. During his sophomore year of high school, Gabriel was barely thinking about college until he was given the opportunity to take PSEO. His PSEO professor was hard on him, but still more lenient than his college professors once he transitioned to a face-to-face college environment. Gabriel wasn’t completely prepared for the face-to-face college environment, or the pace of the online course he took in college, but he was up for the challenge after completing PSEO. Gabriel felt like he was told everything about college prior to transition, but learned that college was not like high school and “you got a really avoid outside distractions. You just got to do you”.

Luciana was one of two valedictorians in high school and weeks away from her college graduation when interviewed. Luciana and Fabiana journeyed together from high school to their upcoming college graduation. Luciana perceived high school as relatively easy and believed college would be, “super, super, super hard and almost too hard to like, succeed”. She believed it would be possible to succeed in college, but also felt as though she were at a disadvantage even though she took AP and PSEO courses in high school. Luciana tried to use the same skills she used in high school, but the pace in college was much faster than anticipated and she went from valedictorian to a student with a 2.8 GPA in college.

Luciana revealed that PSEO was “extremely easy” and she was “happy that it was easy but also a little disappointed that it didn't really show me how challenging college classes can be because it wasn't challenging at all”. In Luciana’s high school, there were

only a few students enrolled in PSEO and no one watched them to ensure they didn't cheat. Although she knew it was wrong, Luciana was able to search Google for answers to test questions for PSEO which was something she couldn't do once she transitioned to a face-to-face college environment. Reflecting on her experiences in PSEO and her transition to college, Luciana was left feeling despair.

Luciana "walked into undergrad thinking it was going to be similar to that [PSEO]". She perceived herself as having a false sense of confidence. It would have been helpful for her to know how much time she would need to spend studying to get good grades and not be an average student. She revealed, "in high school I was a superior student so I really didn't put, I didn't study hardly ever so it would have been good to really, really been able to grasp like you need to study at least twice as much as the class is, like however many hours of classes you need to study like twice as much as that, something like that".

Milena perceived college as being "extra hard" with lots of professors giving hard work all of the time. Milena described herself as "always determined to get things done [and] driven" when it came to education. She described her transition to college as a "big eye opener" and although she took a college course in high school, transitioning to college was still a "big transformation as far as like actually getting out and actually sitting down and talking with your professors and getting to know them even though you're in a bigger environment". Trying to balance her school work and meet deadlines was difficult. Once Milena realized "it [college] was more on yourself than anything", she was able to better understand what she needed to do to be successful in college instead of college being a challenge.

Milena enjoyed the ODEP she completed in college and it helped her to realize that she will have professors that she is going to like and others that she may not. The ODEP Milena completed was very structured and attempted to keep the format close to an actual college course, but there was still a high school teacher in the room pushing students, adjusting assignments as needed, and allowed students to make up missed assignments. This was very different from what Milena actually experienced in college. As a college student, Milena reflects back on her experience with an ODEP and recognizes the leniency that doesn't exist in her college experiences. Milena's advice to students transitioning to college is, "don't be scared to make changes. Like as far as adapting to the different behavior that's around you. Just because there's always going to be something that's difficult for you but don't be afraid to reach out to people that's there for you, to help you out because you have to reach out".

Basing her initial perceptions of college off of movies, Monica thought college was going to be full of parties, not much work, and "real easy". She believed she could do well if she stayed focused and surrounded herself with like-minded people. Monica described her transition to college as horrible and she felt horrible. She went from getting A's in high school without doing much work, but found that partying and not focusing on school caused her to miss assignments. According to Monica, the lack of focus on her academics "affected me like really horrible. I ended up failing a class". She didn't realize that her college professors were not going to baby her or give her a slap on the hand. Monica realized, "they're going to let you fall on your butt, like to learn your lesson".

Monica had good and bad experiences in PSEO. She was excited the first year she took PSEO, but became bored and frustrated with PSEO. She said it was tough

dealing with high school teachers who are present during your PSEO class period and also dealing with the online professor. She wasn't accustomed to the way professors graded assignments, especially when the high school teacher looked over the assignment and gave it a high score. Monica explained, "It's just, it was just bad to where it was just sometimes I felt like maybe I wasn't good enough". Monica revealed, "When I started going to [college] classes I was like oh this is not like high school, this is not like the PSEO or the college classes I was taking in high school. It's a whole different ballgame, a whole different ballgame". She believed she would have benefited from campus visits in high school and actually sitting in on real college lectures.

Prior to transitioning, Sofia perceived college to be a "bit like high school" and thought it would be a great experience, but "had no idea of all the academics behind it and the social stuff behind it". Sofia believed that because she was putting in the effort in high school and doing really well, she could repeat what she was doing and "step up [her] game" to be a successful college student. Her transition to college was "rough" and a "real blow to [her] self-esteem". Sofia thought she could work a little harder to be successful in college, but she had to ask for help and go to tutoring. Sofia revealed, "It was kind of embarrassing at first because I've never needed a tutor. I'm smart. I don't need this". After the first few weeks in college, Sofia began to wonder if college was the right choice for her.

Sofia associates only positive feelings with PSEO. She claimed, "even though I struggled in college it definitely helped me prepare and help me learn a lot better about it [college]". Reflecting back on her first year in college, Sofia realized that completing PSEO helped her in the long run. Some of the skills that she took with her to college

were developed in PSEO. She remembered the times that she struggled during PSEO and recalled what she did to overcome her struggles in high school. Sofia was grateful that her PSEO professors did not “dumb it down” and she was held accountable to put in the effort to succeed.

Ultimately, Sofia was confused about balancing her social life with academics. Sofia had two perceptions of college. She believed, “There were kids that partied like you see in the movies and everything and that sounds really ridiculous, but the kids partied all the time, and the kids that studied all the time, and I knew which group I wanted to be in”. Sofia was miserable without any type of social life and found that having a hobby to distract herself from academics made her second year in college much better than her first.

Biography

Danielle N. Formen was born November 28, 1982 in Ohio. She attended Westerville South High School in Ohio, during which time she performed with a vocal jazz ensemble and developed an interest in art, Spanish, and geology.

In 2005, Danielle received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish, with honors, from the University of Cincinnati. Additionally, she obtained a certification in Business Practices in Latin America and spent time in Mexico after graduation.

Upon her return from Mexico, Danielle enrolled in a bachelor's plus program at Ashland University in Ohio. Danielle obtained a PreK-12 teaching license in Spanish with a K-12 Reading Endorsement. In 2010, Danielle received a Masters of Education, with a specialization in literacy, from Ashland University. In 2008, Danielle began teaching high school Spanish and left the field in 2013 believing that she could make more of an impact on education outside of the classroom.

In 2015, Danielle obtained her Doctorate of Education from the University of Phoenix. Earning a doctorate in Educational Leadership, with a specialization in educational technology, sparked a new interest and she shifted her focus toward becoming an instructional designer.

Additionally, Danielle enjoys baking and creating custom cakes. She hopes to establish a baking empire that will enable her to give back to her community and provide educational opportunities to those in need.