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"Makin' It": A Study of First Generation College Graduates Lives Out of Poverty

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"MAKIN' IT": A STUDY OF FIRST GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATES
LIVES OUT OF POVERTY

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ABSTRACT

Scholars across various disciplines concur that poverty[1], especially when experienced generationally, is difficult to escape (MacLeod, 2009; Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Nieto, 2005; Corak, 2006; Sawhill & Haskins, 2008). Yet, while much is known about the existence and persistence of poverty, we know less about how and why those individuals who successfully escape poverty are able to do so (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009).

Guided by critical social and institutional theory this qualitative study, examined the experiences of individuals who grew up in generational poverty (with parents who had no high school diploma), yet became first-generation college graduates, and entered the American middle/ upper class[2]. Specifically, this study examined the educational journeys of three African American adults, two male and one female, and one White male. Through the use of interviews and historical document analysis, this study's findings revealed that many factors served as protective processes in the lives of the participant's to support their resilient responses to adversity. I also employed the use of discursive strategies in this study to examine how the participant's explain their ability to escape generational poverty.

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[1] According to Bishaw and Macartney (2010), poverty is defined as living at or below the federally calculated poverty threshold.

[2] I recognize definitions of middle-class to be ambiguous. For example, a Pew study of middle-class households (2012) found 46% of Americans with incomes of $100,000 identified as middle class, as well as 65% of Americans with incomes of $50,000 to $99,999, 51% of households with annual incomes of $30,000 to $49,999 and 35% with incomes of under $30,000.

I argue that the participant's educational journeys are unique in that they illustrate not only how they made it out of poverty, but also that there is much to be found beyond, their simple explanations of being able to execute resilience in times of adversity, hard work and inner resources to end generational poverty. Particularly, I argue that educators and policy makers will require shifts in ideological views on the bootstrap theory or the use of individualism as the main attributing factor in helping one get out of college.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life,
few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even to hope,
by a limit imposed from without, but falsely identifies as lying within.
~ Gould (1996, p.50)

Economist Thomas Hertz (2006) declared in his report on economic mobility in America that, "children of the poor are likely to remain poor" (p. 2). Scholars across various disciplines concur that poverty[3], especially when experienced generationally, is difficult to escape (Corcoran, 1995; Bowles & Gintis, 1972; Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Nieto, 2005; Corak, 2006; Sawhill & Haskins, 2008). Indeed, findings from research studies on intergenerational transmission poverty in the U.S. (e.g. Corak, 2006; Hertz, 2006; Sawhill& Haskins; 2008) confirm that just 6% of children from the bottom quintile of the income distribution make it to the top quintile (above $98,000). Furthermore, Hertz (2006) and Sawhill et al. (2008) found that only 1% of children in the United States born into the bottom quintile were able to make it to the top five percentile of the income distribution (above $108,000). Yet, while much is known about the existence and persistence of poverty, we know less about how and why those individuals who successfully escape poverty are able to do so (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009).

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[3] According to Bishaw and Macartney (2010), poverty is defined as living at or below the federally calculated poverty threshold.

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Renowned American education reformer Horace Mann (1868) touted that education, "beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men--the balance-wheel of the social machinery." Linking education to economic mobility, he further asserted that obtaining an education, "does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich; it prevents being poor" (p.669). Many functionalists agree with Mann that education provides a level-playing field in the quest for economic sustainability and growth (Sadovnik, 2007). Notably, Cookson and Persell (1991) contend that African Americans in particular believe education to be an "avenue of upward mobility" (p. 221). From this perspective then, education, or more specifically, 'working hard' in school, can either stave off or eradicate poverty.

Given that many in the United States believe schools democratize access to future economic opportunities, one's willingness to 'work hard' in school is assumed to directly relate to how successful one will become, academically and economically (MacLeod, 2009). A belief that merit will eventually lead to the recognition of one's intelligence and skill level (Krauze & Slomczynski, 1985; Oakes, 1985; Brantlinger, 2003; MacLeod, 2009; PEW, 2012) also figures prominently in the American educational narrative. Consequently, within discourses surrounding poverty in education, 'success stories' often feature 'hard work' as the primary mechanism by which generational poverty may be eradicated, thus perpetuating the belief that, through hard work, success is attainable *despite* one's economic or academic background (Downey, von Hippel, & Broh, 2004). However, a growing body of research (e.g. MacLeod, 2009; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Bohn, 2006; Bowles, Gintis, & Groves, 2005; Freire,1968; Isaacs, Sawhill & Haskins, 2008; Hertz, 2006; Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild, 2001; Downey, von Hippel & Broh,

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2004; Smith, 2008) clearly demonstrates that exercising habits of hard work does not guarantee academic or economic success. Yet this belief, also referred to as the "achievement ideology (MacLeod, 2009)," is pervasively rooted in American success stories.

Closely linked to notions of meritocracy, and just as (if not more) pervasive, is the "American Dream" narrative which expands on the meritocratic ideology by espousing the belief that success is attainable for *everyone*. Essentially, anyone in America, even those who start at the bottom of the income distribution, can use their skills, talents, and hard work to reach the top (or at the very least fare comparatively). Importantly, nearly 60 percent of Americans believe in the American Dream (Hochschild, 1995; Hertz, 2006). Moreover, McNamee and Miller (2009) found that people endorse the dream narrative, despite the persistence of other well-known narratives to the contrary, such as:

> "It takes money to make money" (inheritance); "It's not what you know but who you know" (connections); "What matters is being in the right place at the right time" (luck); "There is not an even playing field" (discrimination); and "He or she married into money" (marriage)" (p.1).

Economists, political scientists, sociologists, and educators continually point out contradictions in the promises of meritocracy and the American Dream (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; Hertz, 2006; Sawhill & Haskins, 2008). Yet, Hochschild (2001) contends that public education is viewed, "as the place where Americans seek to transform the ideology of the American dream into practice" (p. 35). Many parents entrust schools to be the mechanism by which their child's hard work, skills, and talent will be recognized

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and rewarded accordingly. Inside (and outside) of classrooms, children are repeatedly

told that if they work hard enough, and put effort into their studies, they will be

successful. Interestingly, schools mention little or nothing about the ways in which

social, economic, and racial inequities might inhibit one's success (Boutte, 2007).

Bolstering the connections between education and economics are recent research

studies that document how possession of a college degree can significantly improve one's

economic status (see e.g. Carnevale, Cheah, & Rose, 2011; Carnevale, Rose, & Hanson,

2012; Carnevale, Strohl, & Melton, 2011; Institute on Higher Education Policy, 2010).

However, a 2010 report released by the National Center for Education Statistics found

that, in 2008, only, "About 28 percent of high school graduates from high-poverty

schools attended a 4-year institution after graduation, compared with 52 percent of high

school graduates from low-poverty schools" (NCES,2010, p.17). The assumption that

obtaining an education (while working hard in school) is the primary vehicle by which

one can escape poverty is further challenged by the Advisory Committee on Student

Financial Assistance who assert that, "only 6 percent of students with the lowest

socioeconomic status (SES) earn a bachelor's degree compared to 40 percent with the

highest SES" (2001, p. 4). Thus research findings consistently demonstrate the

complexity of the connection between educational and economic outcomes, giving

credence to DiAngelo and Sensoy's (2010) assertion, "that our achievements are not

simply or solely the result of merit and hard work (p. 102)."

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine what can be ascertained from the

experiences of four individuals who grew up in generational poverty (with parents who

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did not possess high school diplomas) and attended academically and economically inferior schools, yet became first-generation college graduates and entered into the middle class[4]. Specifically, I wanted to better understand how they articulate, and make meaning of, their journey out of poverty, focusing on their educational experiences from kindergarten to college, and their transition from college to the workforce. Informed by critical social theories, I was particularly interested in investigating those moments when their individual actions (agency) intersected with institutional factors (structures) in a way that allowed them to obtain success[5]. Further, I sought to better understand how physical, cultural, and social capital influenced their trajectories. Specifically, my inquiry was driven by a desire to understand who or what influenced their ability to acquire, accept, and deploy: a) physical capital in the form of assets, land, and money; b) cultural capital in the form of normed cultural beliefs about speaking, behaving, and appearance, etc.; and, c) social capital as it related to social networks. In light of the fact that the participants likely had limited parental educational assistance and few options to attend better schools, both of which are factors that researchers and scholars have

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[4]I recognize definitions of middle-class to be ambiguous. For example, a Pew study of middle-class households (2012) found 46% of Americans with incomes of $100,000 identified as middle class, as well as 65% of Americans with incomes of $50,000 to $99,999, 51% of households with annual incomes of $30,000 to $49,999 and 35% with incomes of under $30,000.

[5]Success is defined in this study in two ways. First, the fact that it is almost statistically impossible to end generational poverty speaks to one reason why the participants were classified as successful. Second, for the purposes of this study, the participants were also viewed as successful because, not only did they end generational poverty by means of securing a professional career, but they were also classified as successful due to their ability to pass wealth onto their offspring. Success from this perspective is viewed as pivotal as studies indicate people in poverty, as well as members of the Black middle class, have difficulty passing on wealth (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). Moreover, a Pew Research report (2011), based on 2009 US Census, reports that White households have a median wealth 20 times that of Black households. Therefore, acquiring the ability to pass on wealth is deemed a success in that it is an example of 'beating the odds'. Transmission of generational wealth is also deemed a success because wealth has the potential to help the next generation (for example by way of creating a means to fare better in economic downturns or purchase land in "high quality neighborhoods and schools") (Hardaway et al, 2009; Corcoran & Matsudaira, 2004).

identified as crucial in the journey to obtain a college degree, I found the exploration of their lives particularly interesting, (Engle, 2007).

While I recognize that individual characteristics such as hard work, determination, and drive have been identified as significant factors in ending generational poverty (Condly, 2006), I sought to probe the complex interactions between agency (as manifested through hard work, resistance to or challenging institutional practices, as well as engaging cultural games (Ortner, 2006) that function within certain institutions. Through an examination of the structural challenges the participants faced in generational poverty, and their corresponding individual responses, my intent was to contribute to literature that focuses on helping children create a permanent path out of generational poverty. I also believe that the stories the participants told about their journeys out of poverty reveal the ways in which they made meaning of the institutional and individual challenges they encountered and overcame. Finally, I was interested in understanding in what ways they considered or saw policies and programs as influencing their educational, social, and cultural experiences.

Research Questions

Drawing on a qualitative approach to inquiry informed by critical and interpretive theories, this study explored four individual's narratives regarding their journey out of poverty. The questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. How do four adults (three African American, one White) who grew up in generational poverty articulate their journey out of poverty?

a. What are the educational stories they tell as a part of this journey?

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b. What are the professional/work-related stories they tell as a part of this journey?

2. What are the factors or influences to which they attribute significance in telling their story of their journey out of poverty?

3. How do they make meaning of their own success in ending generational poverty?

Study Significance

Through investigations of the normalized, institutional practices that keep children from making it to college, scholars have demonstrated the multifaceted ways in which inequality in schools is reproduced (Delpit, 2006; Lareau, 1987, 2000, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Bowles & Gintis, 2002; MacLeod, 2009; Heath, 1978; Kozol, 2005). These studies have typically explored socio-economic status and schooling opportunities or experiences (Lareau, 2003; Kozol, 2005; Moyi, 2009; Gorski, 2006, 2008), cultural disconnects between families and schools that manifest in the validation of dominant cultural capital (Jay, 2003; Berlak, 2001; Lareau, 2000, 2003; Boutte, 2008; Boutte & Hill, 2006; Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Valenzuela, 2002), analysis of cognitive sociological and psychological adaptation approaches to accepting, understanding and utilizing dominant cultural capital (Steele, 1997, Ogbu, 1998; Valenzuela, 1999, 2002; Willis, 1977; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) or the impact of parental educational background/assistance (Lareau, 2003;Engle, 2007; Bowles and Gintis, 2011; Moyi, 2012), and the lack of programs offered by colleges/universities to support first-generation college graduates (Auclair et al, 2008; Engle 2007). Yet, while these studies have made significant contributions to our understanding regarding how varied systemic

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issues and institutional practices in education perpetuate inequality, research that examines the stories of people who made it out of generational poverty, despite encountering educational challenges, is lacking. As a result, Hardaway & McLoyd (2009) contend that, "there is little understanding of how individuals escape poverty and how this process may vary depending on race" (p. 242).

It is not yet clear how the agency of some students may intersect with institutional practices in ways that lead to their eventual success; however, research demonstrates the ways in which the schooling experiences of children living in poverty can rob them of the fruits of their agency (hard work) (Valenzuela, 1999; Willis, 1977; MacLeod, 2009). Further, researchers point out that it is "imperative that efforts to improve postsecondary access and success for first-generation students recognize and address the systemic nature of the underlying problems (i.e. inequalities in the K-12 system) related to postsecondary opportunity in order to generate viable solutions" (Engle, 2007, p. 40).

Consequently, more research is needed not only to understand the influence of K-12 educational experiences in ending generational poverty, but the influence of post-secondary experiences as well, particularly the crucial transition between high school and college (as well as between college and the workplace). In addition, more work surrounding the impact of the meritocracy narrative in education is needed to understand how institutions and individuals contribute to remaining in or removing oneself from generational poverty. Sandlin and Clark (2009) attest that master narratives, such as the meritocracy narrative, are important as they have the power to shape the perception of individual achievement, groups of people, and the creation of social policies. Thus, findings from this work may add to the growing body of research that explores elements

in the life experiences of young people in generational poverty that support and constrain opportunities to make it into the middle class. It was my intention to simultaneously explore the social, cultural, economic, and political factors that impact the educational and professional journeys of children who grew up in generational poverty in hopes of facilitating the development of programs, policies, and practices aimed at improving their life trajectories.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Joseph Maxwell (2005) asserts that a conceptual frame is of primary importance
to a study in that it allows the researcher to make explicit the assumptions and
perspectives that inform their work. As such, Maxwell suggests a model consisting of
four components that provide a clear structure for a researcher's conceptual framework.
Drawing on this model, my understanding of generational poverty's existence,
persistence, and impact on those trying to make it out was informed by: a) my situated
knowledge and assumptions regarding this topic; b) a theoretical framework that draws
from critical, institutional, political economic theories (as well as concepts associated
with these theories such as classism, racism, agency, cultural norms, etc.); c) the
extensive literature on poverty and first-generation college graduates; and, d) knowledge
and understanding gained from the pilot study that I conducted in the spring of 2011.

Researcher's Situated Knowledge

I am a female, African American, second generation college graduate. I grew up
in a middle-class household, in a neighborhood where all the families around me were
also African American, were of the same socioeconomic class, and where most parents
and their children obtained a college degree. My parents, first-generation college
graduates who grew up in poverty, always impressed upon my sister and me the
importance of an education. My parents told us constantly to study and work hard in

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school, as doing so would lead to success. Growing up in my household, college was viewed as extremely important, and thus considered as 'not optional.' Consequently, I grew up assuming that college was the minimum academic expectation for most people, regardless of race, class, or gender. However, my experiences as an undergraduate and graduate student as well as my teaching experiences allowed me to reconsider why college is not viewed as a viable option for/by all.

Upon taking an African American Studies course as an undergraduate I became aware of how historically African Americans had been denied equitable educational opportunities. Thus, considering the era in which my maternal and paternal grandparents grew up, it was not unreasonable for me to assume that they probably never saw college as a viable option, especially considering the fact that my maternal and paternal grandparents did not complete high school. Consequently, I have come to realize that many African Americans still lag behind Whites in terms of educational achievement. African Americans underachievement in education is evident in my family as one of my parents older siblings never completed high school, while the rest never attended college.

Yet, the impact of inferior schools and schooling experiences did not have a profound impact on me until I became a graduate student. Education courses framed with a critical lens have made me aware of tracking; disparities in school funding; pre-school disparities in regard to preparation, access and resources, and low teacher expectations related to racism and classism - all of which are educational dilemmas experienced primarily by students of color and poor students. Furthermore, given the era in which my parents went to school (before desegregation in South Carolina was federally mandated), coupled with the fact that they did not grow up with the expectation

that college was attainable and mandatory, I was quite curious as to how my parents were able to become college graduates. My parents' feat became particularly intriguing upon also learning in graduate school that it is highly unlikely for children of parents with low academic attainment and who live in poverty to make it to college and reach middle class status. Knowledge of the vastly different educational experiences between my parents, their older siblings, and my grandparents has compelled me to ponder what happened, from an institutional and individual perspective, for my parents that did not happen for their siblings and my grandparents. Thus, I brought to this research a genuine interest regarding how and why my parents' educational routes were altered. For me, this is substantial as I am keenly aware that my parents' ability to become first-generation college graduates may have paved the way for my sister and me to have positive educational and economic experiences.

As a former middle school teacher, I have had the opportunity to witness the institutional and systemic issues that pervade the educational system in South Carolina. I taught in a single gender magnet program where the majority of the children were middle class. I was one of few African American teachers not only in the magnet program, but also in the school in general. When I first began to teach I held certain beliefs about teachers and schooling. I believed that teachers, for the most part, cared and put their best effort forward to educate 'other people's children' (Delpit, 2006). I believed that if you went to school, behaved, tried your hardest to improve your skills and talents, and made good grades, then you would naturally excel. Prior to becoming a teacher, I was aware that racism and classism existed. I was not aware, however, of the ways in which individual, institutional, social, cultural, and political ills impacted teachers and

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schooling. Ultimately, my experiences as a teacher made me keenly aware that academic success was not just about working hard to get good grades. I learned that a student's ability to receive good grades and become academically successful also involves contending with possible subtle moments of racism, classism, and sexism.

During my time as a teacher, it was not uncommon for me and White colleagues to have different opinions about the behaviors of, and educational expectations for, students. For instance, on one occasion I witnessed white colleagues refer to African American children as thugs. On numerous occasions, I had African American children who confided in me about teachers whom they thought were behaving in a racist manner. In addition, African American children who were characterized as discipline problems by the three other White teachers on my team were not discipline problems in my classroom. I also noticed instances wherein some White teachers and I would hold different perspectives on the same events. For example, some White teachers may have viewed a group of African American students talking loudly in a circle as potential trouble, while I took a different perspective and perceived the same scene as just that, a group of children talking and laughing. Such experiences made me aware that subjective interpretations of certain social constructions related to race and class can have a profound impact on a child's educational experiences. In addition, I brought to this study an understanding that the subjective interpretations educators make of students may be subtle, yet have an enormous negative or positive impact on students. Consequently, I am also aware that students may not be able to identify and articulate all of the instances in school that may have hindered or helped them.

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The single gender magnet program, in which I taught, consisted mostly of middle to upper middle class parents. For the most part, these parents were highly involved and vocal about their child's educational experience to. In this capacity, I came to understand the power of parents and parents positioning as leverage to advocate for their child's education. Most of my students' parents had flexibility in their schedules to attend parent-teacher conferences, Open Houses, and random classroom observations. In addition, most of my students' parents had at least a bachelor's degree. Moreover, consideration for acceptance into single gender program required parents to have prepared their child in such a way that their cumulative standardized test scores were impressive. In addition, many of my students had been in a Magnet school track since first grade where, like the single gender program where I taught, parents had to help their child complete an application and prepare for an interview. Consequently, in observing parents in this capacity, it became clear that for, these parents, it was not just about having expectations that their child attend college, but actively opening up the doors and lighting the pathways to make their child's journey there easier, and increasing the number of possible colleges they could attend.

My experiences with schools as a student and educator have shaped my current understanding of the structure and function of schooling. On one hand, I believe that schools have the capability to be the great equalizer. Potentially and theoretically, schools are a place where children can learn and ultimately have access to tools that can promote academic and economic success. Thus, I cannot help but assume that there are institutional and individual issues that profoundly undergird inferior educational experiences. Therefore, I believe that soliciting diverse narratives from those who made

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it out of poverty sheds light on the silent and invisible practices that may inhibit or promote their academic achievement.

Theoretical Framing of the Study

This study is informed by a framework that combines critical social and institutional theories to demonstrate how issues of power interact with cultural ideologies and practices to shape efforts to end generational poverty. These two theories help to make clear how institutional arrangements such as schools and schooling, and organizational practices such as utilization of dominant cultural ideologies and various forms of capital, impact one's ability to end generational poverty. Critical social theory and institutional theory also help to provide an understanding of how dominant cultural ideologies and capital (in its various forms) impact individual efforts to eradicate generational poverty via the process of obtaining an education.

Critical social theory. Critical theory presumes that, "all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 304). Yet, it is not enough to understand that power relations within a social structure shape normative assumptions that benefit certain groups. It is also imperative to recognize how power relations can shape normative assumptions in a variety of social structures. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) assert that critical social theory is "concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (p. 306). Therefore, critical social theory illuminates the various culturally embedded contexts which shape institutional and individual

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experiences and practices through a persistent consideration of the influence of historical,

political, economic, and societal events that impact culture (Leonard, 2004; Geertz,

1973). In essence, critical social theory troubles normative ideologies surrounding the

motivation behind institutional and individual actions (Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg,

2011). Accordingly, a critical social framework also involves consideration of how a

varied context of "social, historical, political and cultural influences" shape one's

educational experiences while trying to make it out of generational poverty (Kincheloe,

2000, p. 304). This understanding serves as the basis for my argument that an accurate

assessment of individuals experiences in schools and generational poverty relies on

simultaneous reflection of institutional and individual practices.

Educational anthropologist Frederick Erickson suggested that the incorporation of

schooling within a critical context allows for an understanding of how "culture as shared

ways of making sense reveals the action, patterns, and underlying assumptions in the

conduct of educational practice that otherwise might go unnoticed, or that might be

dismissed as trivial because they are so commonplace" (Erickson, 1987, p. 23). For

instance, critically assessing the structure and function of schools reveals the patterns of

power in education reproduced through cultural ideologies. Accordingly, a critical social

theoretical frame, in the context of education, questions who has and does not have power

(the oppressor/dominant group) in a given culture), and how that power originated.

Lastly, critical social theory makes clear how certain groups have consistently

experienced inferior educational experiences (Kincheloe et al, 2011). Within a critical

social theoretical frame, there is an understanding that lack of access to quality

educational resources has contributed to African Americans disproportionate

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representation in generational poverty, to their experiences in inferior schools, and ultimately inferior educational outcomes (Kozol, 2005). Thus, from a critical social perspective, any understanding of the stagnant educational and economic achievement experienced by African Americans as a group must recognize the significance of systemic factors that undoubtedly shaped educational experiences.

Institutional theory. Barley and Tolbert (1997) assert that institutional theory elucidates the ways in which individuals within any given institution are:

> suspended in a web of values, norms, rules, beliefs, and taken-for-granted assumptions, that are at least partially of their own making. These cultural elements define the way the world is and should be. They provide blueprints for organizing by specifying the forms and procedures an organization of a particular type should adopt if it is to be seen as a member-in-good-standing. (p. 94)

Moreover, Barley and Tolbert (1997) also contend that careful analysis of institutions or structures[6] illuminates certain cultural beliefs, also described as 'blueprints', that reign over any institutions organizational practices. Furthermore, an institutional frame provides a greater understanding of why and how certain organizational practices manifest as right or wrong, good or bad. Ultimately, institutional theory is pivotal in that it can help to expose how institutional and individual practices lead to a life of privilege or challenge (Dacin and Dacin, 2008). Thoroughly examining the motivations for, the advantages/disadvantages, and the perceived necessity of enacting certain cultural beliefs reveals the structure and function of an institution. This is

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[6] From this point on, the term institution and structure are used interchangeably.

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particularly helpful when trying to discern why certain organizational practices and arrangements that maintain an institution continually produce advantages for a few. Finally, institutional theory has the potential to initiate de-institutionalization by exposing how organizational practices can lead to oppressive arrangements (Dacin et al, 2008).

All facets of society and culture influence the shape and function of schools (as an institution) and schooling (the way content and education is offered) (Valenzuela, 1999) in America (Rury, 2005). Institutional theory makes clear the hegemonic[7] practices used to wield and maintain power. Educational institutionalists Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Brian Rowan insist that:

> Through institutional analysis we learn something about how education connects with other vital institutions in society; what the constraints are under which this important part of our social life takes place; and what the latitude and the limits are that we confront if we attempted to change the existing institutional order. (Meyer &Rowan, 2006, p. 4)

Accordingly, Meyer and Rowan assert that a theory of 'new institutionalism' is better equipped to address the recent ways cultural changes have influenced the institution of education. The 'new institutionalism' is focused on revealing "which social group might be favored or disadvantaged by a particular arrangement; whose vested interests might be tied up with a given institutional form and practice" (Meyer & Rowan, 2006, p.19). Consequently, an institutional theoretical frame, in the context of education, can help to elucidate how generational poverty persists. Institutional theory, which also extends to organizational theory and practices, allows for an understanding that organizational practices are equally, if not more, crucial in shaping families and individuals economic outcomes.

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[7] I make use of Wells' (2009) definition of hegemony as "the process whereby a dominant group projects its way of seeing social reality so successfully that its views are accepted as the norm, as common sense, as the natural order, even by those who are in fact oppressed or disempowered by it."

Dominant cultural ideologies.

The socialization of dominant cultural ideologies in schools. Functionalist, conflict theorists, and symbolic interactionalist frame the structure and function of the institution of schools in its relation to physical, cultural, and social capital differently. Functionalists believe schools are for the socialization of dominant, cultural institutional values. Functionalists see dominant cultural ideologies as superior or rational social constructions, not born of oppressive acts (Sadovnik, 2007). Functionalists like Ruby Payne (2005) endorse a cultural deficit or culture of poverty theory. Proponents of deficit theory do not validate the connection between oppressive economic institutional practices and social arrangements in the creation of disparities in human existence. In fact, deficit theorists are of the belief that families in generational poverty do not possess the cognitive competence and/or ability to understand how to execute hard work, especially as a means of eradicating poverty In contrast, critical social theorists understand that deficit theory, only serves to "demean poor people" (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 24) through an unwillingness to explicate the relevancy of a socio-historical context. The deficit theory narrative also fosters desensitization to inequity by diverting attention away from institutional hegemonic practices (Gorski, 2006).

Primarily, functionalists believe that meritocracy and democratization run in the social, political, and economic veins of Americas various cultural institutions; they also maintain that schools sustain a democratic society (Sadovnik, 2007). For functionalists, merit, hard work, skills, and talent are the primary factors in determining how one becomes successful or attains physical capital (Sadovnik, 2007; Krauze and Slomczynski, 1985). The fact that individuals enact social constructions within institutions and that

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such actions can be oppressive is of little to no significance to functionalists. Issues of race, class, or gender discrimination are not pertinent. For example, if White men make more money than White women, for functionalists, such an outcome is not the result of social inequities, but rather it is the result of the fittest individuals rising to the top. Schools, then, serve as the great equalizer for functionalists (Sadovnik, 2007; Collins 1971). Theoretically, in schools the same curriculum is dispensed to all and accordingly, students who are the fittest will make use of this information and move forward. Any resulting disparities in academic or income achievement is primarily the fault of the individual and their family. Therefore, functionalists do not see a correlation between the intersection of organizational practices within institutions and the ways in which they contribute to gaps in achievement (Farkas, 2004) and income (Kochhar, Fry & Taylor, 2011).

Conflict theorists take issue with functionalists in the assertion that academic and income achievement is born of parents passing on intellect, or the Protestant notion of a 'hard work' ethic. Since the late 1960s, the scholarship of influential economists Herbert Bowles, Samuel Gintis (2002), and evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould (1996) has been instrumental in invalidating the argument that characteristics like merit or genetics, i.e. IQ, profoundly impacts academic and income attainment. Bowles and Gintis (2002) studied the intergenerational inheritance of incomes and found a "heterogeneous collection of mechanisms" (p. 4) that impact income to varying degrees. Bowles and Gintis (2002) concluded that IQ inheritance was a minor contribution, in comparison to the cumulative effects of transmission of cognitive skills and non-cognitive traits, personality or "idiosyncratic effects" (p. 14), geographical location, height, beauty, health

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status, group membership, i.e. race, gender, and/or class. Out of all the aforementioned variables, Bowles and Gintis (2002) found that the most pertinent influences on income transmission were "wealth, race, and schooling" (p. 22). For Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011) race is a variable that is akin to a 'wild card' in one's life that may "matter more than education or occupation in determining earnings" (p. 1).

Agent/target groups and capital. It is imperative to understand that the categorization of an individual as possessing and utilizing agent or dominant cultural ideologies is highly correlated with the amount of capital one is able to amass (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), in addition to their class position (Weber, 1922). Furthermore, it must be understood that capital in America, primarily in the form of land, money, and assets, and has the ability to morph into various forms. Historically, the system of capitalism, an economic system based on private ownership and decision-making in the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities has cast grave disparities in American society. Karl Marx (as cited in Lemert, 1844), one of the many famous critics of capitalistic systems, stated in *Estranged Labour* that in a free enterprise:

> the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities; that the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production; that the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands. (p. 32)[8]

Yet, individuals rarely contest the efficacy and value of capitalism. It is then often of little consequence that children challenged with *making it* or surpassing their family's oppressive economic realm are more than likely born to families that are far removed

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[8] Excerpt from Karl Marx from "Estranged Labour" from the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. In C. Lemert (Ed.), Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings (32-38). Boulder, CO: Westview, 2010.

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from mass ownership and control of production, consumption, and distribution. Consequently, to some degree, one's quality of life in America is significantly impacted by capitalism.

The morphology of capital. In *Class, Status, Party* (1922) Weber argued that class status is yet another by-product of capitalism. Weber insisted that *estranged labour* and the segmentation of labor fragments into a stratification of class and class status (Collins, 1971; Sadovnik, 2007). In the context of class status, Weber asserted, "classes are stratified according to their relations to the production and acquisition of goods; whereas status groups are stratified according to the principles of their consumption of goods as represented by styles of life (Lemert, 1946, 127)". Accordingly, the highest class rank usually sets/creates dominate preferred forms of behavior/customs to be considered normative, valued, accepted, prestigious and honorable. Moreover, target groups are seen as aspiring to mimic agent group's behavior, customs, and language (Brantlinger, 2003; Freire, 1968; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Jean Anyon (1980) also found capital to be symbolic in that it:

> can be socially legitimated knowledge of how the production process works, its financial, managerial, technical, or other "secrets". Symbolic capital can also be technical skills that provide the ability to, say, produce the dominant scientific, artistic, and other culture, or to manage the systems of industrial and cultural production. Skillful application of symbolic capital may yield social and cultural power, and perhaps physical capital as well. (p. 69)

Economic capital and education. Historically and presently the institution of education in America today is impacted by capitalism. Where there is a system of production, distribution, consumption and social injustices one will find inequalities. Schools in America are a reflection of these inequalities. Socio-economic class, rank,

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and status influence one's occupation, location of residence, and consequently the options of schools available for their offspring. In effect, capital, in the form of money, stocks and land is well-known. Yet, what is not always apparent is that the economic outcomes of generations are invariably related to institutional arrangements. I recognize that economic oppressive practices exist within an institution of capitalistic hegemony. I also recognize that while institutions/structures are impactful, they are not deemed deterministic (MacLeod, 2009).

  The morphology of cultural capital. Capitalism's potential impact on the lives of individuals is endless. To be able to delineate the effects of capital beyond its physical form, Pierre Bourdieu characterized capital as morphing into two main forms: social and cultural. Cultural capital could take the form of preferred arts, or ways of speaking and dressing to be considered respectable, distinguished, or even wealthy. One need only to think about entering into a job interview in America with an unkempt appearance, speaking a version of English other than its standard form, and enacting abnormal ways of behaving. Unless the interviewer intends on offering the job based on nepotism, it is probably unlikely the interviewee will receive a job offer. Thus, Bourdieu views knowing how and when to enact dominant cultural capital as potentially advantageous to one's ultimate acquisition of physical capital in hierarchal society. Acceptance and correct usage of cultural capital can potentially open opportunities to an individual (McNamee and Miller, 2009). One is given the right to remain within a particular structure, clubs, friendships, workplace, provided one continues to comply with the rules or behaviors of the dominant class (Bourdieu, 2007). This type of capital Bourdieu appropriately terms the "best hidden form of hereditary transmission" (2007, p. 86).

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Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital contends that it requires scaffolding. The use and acknowledgement of certain forms of capital as being dominate is a doctrine programmed from birth (Harro, 1996; Bourdieu, 1977) for which the privileged few only truly know how to decode and utilize.

In addition, cultural capital works in an exterior and interior capacity. Agent groups' cultural capital represents the standard and, as such, can normally be found or used for universal cultural communication and interaction. Target groups also possess cultural capital that it is as diverse as the cultural institutions in America. Since target groups cultural capital is often not validated by agent groups, it is enacted mostly among other target specific groups.

The morphology of social capital. Parallel with cultural capital, Bourdieu insisted that social capital is another extension of wealth and thus a means of economic ascension.

> Social capital is the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 88)

Social capital extends to the people one interacts with the most. Portes (1998) found, that as a result, "the most common function attributed to social capital is as a source of network-mediated benefits beyond the immediate family" (p. 13). Thus, it is also vital to understand that the acquisition and use of cultural and social capital and its link to physical capital or guaranteeing or hindering economic advancement is not deterministic.

The enactment of agency in social and cultural capital. From anthropological and sociological perspectives, the enactment of dominant cultural and social capital

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coupled with massive accumulation of economic capital does not guarantee success. Yet, McNamee and Miller (2009) also make use of Bourdieu in their assertion that:

> Despite people's efforts to draw on social networks to enhance their power, wealth, or status, Bourdieu points out that these investment strategies do not always work. Further, those strategies that are successful (i.e. that produce valuable social capital) are not an indication of individual merit, especially in cases in which investments are made by others (e.g. parents) or involve substantial economic capital that is inherited or otherwise unearned. Through social capital, individuals can gain access to economic resources such as desirable jobs, subsidized loans, investment tips, protected markets, and the like. They can increase cultural capital through contact with experts or individuals of refinement. In addition, they can affiliate with institutions that confer valued credentials, such as diplomas or degrees." (p. 80-81)

Use of dominant cultural and social capital with economic capital can be seen as what I term to be a *capital trilogy*. This three way network of capital has proven to significantly increase success. However, the use of capital trilogy has not proven deterministic. For instance, the odds are slim, but students from poverty have been able to make it to high socio-economic class rank and status. However, ties or networks with someone from high socio-economic class status and rank does not guarantee academic and income achievement, nor does the acquisition and utilization of dominant social and cultural capital. The inability to predict the exact proportional use of the capital trilogy is due in part to the notion of agency.

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner (2006) found that the dominated and the dominators interact in cultural or "serious games," in which human behaviors/actions are shaped by external factors. Ortner recognized that the games of gender biases and classism, for example, operate on a semi- conscious level (habitus). Paulo Freire (1968) also insisted that habitus contributes to the target group, or the oppressed, willfully submitting. Freire (1968) argued that habitus enacted by the oppressed does "not necessarily mean that the

oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. However, their perception of

themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression" (p.

45). Ultimately, Ortner found that:

> the anthropology of "agency" is not only about how social subjects, as
> empowered or disempowered actors, play the games of culture, but about laying
> bare what those cultural games are, about their ideological underpinnings, and
> about how the play of the game reproduces or transforms underpinnings. (p. 25)

Thus, notions of agency posit that, at any given time, anyone from the agent or target

group can change or shift their cultural ideology. Doing so has the potential to cause a

subtle shift in the dynamics of cultural institutions. Therefore, it is recognized that

massive changes in cultural ideologies are usually born of societal pressures (Dacin et al.,

2008). The Civil Rights Movement stands as a salient example. Accordingly, although

agency is unpredictable, it is a primary mechanism for de-institutionalization as it has the

potential to spark a countering of culturally hegemonic practices.

Review of Related Research

Physical, social, and cultural capital in education. From generation to

generation, children are more likely to attend the same type of school as their parents;

thus they have the same educational experiences and opportunities. Such an outcome is

directly related to children's exposure and access, or lack thereof, to various forms of

capital. Linking education to physical capital, Cookson and Persell (1985) aptly argue

"where one goes to school can be very important in determining his or her life-styles and

life chances" (p. 16). From an economic perspective, public schools are funded through

various local, state, and federal means. Consequently, most monies for schools come

from tax dollars. This means that where taxpayers are able to pay a higher rate, children

zoned for their respective schools receive better resources and more highly qualified teachers (Wilson, 1997). This does not prove to be a fair system as students of color and students living in poverty disproportionally attend inferior schools.

The possession of significant physical capital markedly increases the odds that one will receive a preeminent education and, as a result, become highly positioned on the economic ladder. Thus, one finds validation in Cookson and Persell's (1985) suggestion that schools are places where power and privileges are transmitted, thereby promoting vastly different educational experiences and outcomes for children of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Hoxby and Avery (2012) found compelling differences in access to and deployment of social and cultural capital in their study of high-achieving, low-income high school students. First, Hoxby et al found that 'income-typical' students, high-achieving, low-income high school students who did not apply to colleges for which they met exclusive academic requirements tended not to have access to "advice about college from a neighbor with a degree" (p. 24). In contrast 'achievement-typical' students, high-achieving, low-income high school students who applied to colleges for which they met exclusive academic requirements tended live next to neighbors with more baccalaureate degree holders in their 'block groups' or neighborhoods, lived in an urban area and were more likely to attend a magnet school. These few factors may increase 'achievement-typical' student's chances to gain information about applying to selective colleges. Despite this small advantage, however, Hoxby et al still argue that it is challenging for low-income, high-achieving students overall to gain access to colleges that meet their academic needs. Furthermore, Hoxby et al assert that colleges need to be more proactive

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in seeking other means to efficiently and more accurately seek out such qualified students. Hoxby et al (20120 assert that high schools should make use of social capital to ensure more high-achieving, low-income students apply to selective colleges for which they meet academic requirements. Hoxby et al suggest that:

> First, a college has many more alumni than admissions staff, and alumni are much more broadly dispersed, geographically, than admissions staff. For instance, the anonymous private, very selective university studied by Meer and Rosen (2012) has at least one alum in the vast majority of U.S. counties. Presumably, it would be possible for colleges to have their alumni inform and recruit local students who appear on their "search lists" of students who are likely qualified for admission (p.28).

Education, race, and class. Comparatively, families from the middle-class also attempt to provide a wide spectrum of schooling experiences for their children. Predictably, the higher the parent is positioned on the economic scale, the higher their level of educational attainment, and, consequently, the better choices of schools they have to offer to their children (McNamee and Miller,2009; Lareau, 2003). In her research on education and social class, Anyon (1980) delineated the middle class into two categories: affluent professional who may own stocks and a notable share of capital, and average middle class, whose "income may be at middle class levels, [but] some characteristics of their work are working-class (e.g. they may have very little control over their work)" (p. 69). Anyon found that where parents were employed in middle working class jobs (i.e. as printers, carpenters, plumbers or as technicians, supervisors, firemen or policemen), classroom rigor for their children normally consisted of rote memorization and strategies of kill, skill, and drill. In comparison, children of middle class families were more likely to receive pedagogy aligned with progressive or constructivist strategies.

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Jonathan Kozol's findings in The Shame of the Nation. Kozol (2005)
demonstrates the disparities found in poor and low-income urban areas. His findings are
in drastic contrast to the school resources of the wealthy. Kozol found that many schools
in urban, poor neighborhoods did not have enough desks and/or seats. Kozol
documented cases of schools in South Bronx where students were forced to attend
schools infested with green fungus mold, leaking ceilings covered with garbage bags and
unclean bathrooms. Kozol also documented schools with no outdoor playgrounds or
indoor gyms. Most strikingly, Kozol's research found these schools filled with "tens of
thousands of black and Hispanic students" (p. 41). Schools in these neighborhoods,
Kozol argued, are more likely to be exposed to pollution or local environmental dangers.
Consequently, it is not atypical for neighborhoods and schools in low-income and areas
of poverty to see increased cases of asthma. Essentially, Kozol's research made clear the
potential cyclical effects of economic oppressive structures on schooling practices for the
poor.

  Poverty and the education pipeline. Overall, studies have indicated that children
in high poverty areas are more likely to experience "unlicensed teachers, crumbling
facilities, growing class sizes and insufficient classroom materials" (Gorski, 2006, p. 16).
Moreover, these educational inequities often characterize their entire K-12 experience.
Thus, is it is of little surprise that children from generational poverty are less likely to
have taken the college prep or higher-level courses in high school necessary to stay
academically afloat in higher education (Oakes, 1985; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Auclair &
Belanger& Doray & Gallien & Groleau & Mason & Mercier, 2008). Further, when
students from generational poverty make it to college, they are faced with a lack of

knowledge about, or access to, supportive programs such as the federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) which provides a pipeline of assistance to children from low-income families, from sixth grade through the persistence of a bachelor's degree. Finally, children in generational poverty are not only less likely to attend college when they grow up in households wherein their parents had limited academic preparation (Choy, 2001; Engle & Tinto, 2008), but they are less likely to remain in college.

Kozol (2005), Lareau (2003), and Cookson and Persell's (1985) studies contribute to an understanding of Sawhill and Haskins (2008, 2009) findings of intergenerational economic oppression and make clear the extent to which educational structures have the ability to constrain educational opportunities. Laying bare the impact of economic disparities in education creates relevant context for how different schooling experiences manifest for different students. While it has been proven that a child in generational poverty can improve their economic condition with an education, it must be understood that most children and families in generational poverty oftentimes do not have access to school systems that prepare them for and send them to college (Berlak, 2001; Gorski, 2008a; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009; IHEP, 2010).

Social and cultural capital in education. Drawing from Bourdieu's notions of social and cultural capital allows an understanding of the ways in which capital has the potential to oppress as well as take many forms. Bourdieu offers the terms cultural and social capital to demonstrate that fact that capital. For Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to assumed ways of behaving, speaking and dressing in a specific context to receive acceptance and validation. In most institutions, such as schools, a dominant form of cultural capital - mainly middle class culture – is validated (Lareau and Horvat, 1999;

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Brantlinger, 2003; Boutte & Hill, 2006; Boutte, 2008; Longwell-Grice & Saffold, 2008).

Researchers argue that this is particularly the case given the fact that a majority of

teachers are White, middle class females (Feistritzer, 2011). Moreover, Bourdieu also

asserts that economic and cultural capital works in conjunction with social capital. Social

capital can be seen as "the aggregate of the actual and potential resources" (Bourdieu,

2007, p. 88) derived from a network of relationships. Networks with other parents in the

community are a prime example of social capital in the context of schools (Lareau, 2000;

1987; Brantlinger, 2003). Thus, a lack of having extensive, strong social capital coupled

with undervalued cultural capital can potentially lead to an oppressive educational

experience for children in generational poverty.

Jay MacLeod's (2009) made use of conflict and symbolic interactionism theory in

his consideration of how various forms of capital reproduce experiences through schools.

MacLeod conducted a longitudinal study of a group of White and Black males in a low-

income area to understand how much a lack of physical, social, cultural, and linguistic

capital would have on student aspirations and achievement. Ultimately, MacLeod found

that, over a twenty year period, both groups repeated the academic and income level of

their parents. Essentially, MacLeod's study found that while the Hallway Hangers, an

all-male group of mostly White students, were hyper-apathetic, and resisted the

educational system, the Brothers, a mostly all-male, Black group bought fully into the

meritocratic myth.

More interestingly, MacLeod's study found that despite the fact that the Brothers

believed in the myth of meritocracy; had parents who were vocally and physically

supportive of school; studied and stayed away from drugs and alcohol; and remained

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respectful to their parents, they still did not fare that much better than the Hallway Hangers who felt and exhibited considerable resistance to the educational system. The most compelling evidence from MacLeod's study is that although both groups lacked immense physical capital, the Hallway Hangers, who resisted dominant cultural and social capital achieved more overall, in terms of income, than the Brothers who readily accepted the limited dominant cultural and social capital to which they had access (MacLeod, 2009). Thus, MacLeod's study is instrumental in making clear that belief in and adherence to dominant cultural ideologies cannot be seen as deterministic in terms of guaranteeing a journey to success.

   Ideologies and education. The correlation between socio-economic rank and schooling options is evident, yet not deterministic. For instance, the odds are slim, but students from poverty have been able to make it into high socio-economic class rank and status. While some efforts have been made to address educational inequities by redistributing economic resources within educational settings (Roch & Marschall & Schneider & Teske, 1997; Gabriel, 2010; Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2009; Jacobs & Lefgren, 2007; Ravitch, 2010; Smith, Jan 2011; Bancroft, 2008), empirical research on the outcomes of these attempts has done little to explain the constant correlations between economic inequality and the education achievement gap between Whites and Blacks (Farkas, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to consider other institutional and structural practices that researchers have demonstrated impact the educational (and economic) achievement of students. Importantly, examining the ideologies embedded in the educational structures, processes, and discourses (Yosso, 2005) that maintain and perpetuate inequities provides an opportunity for developing a

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more comprehensive understanding of the lives of the study participants, and the various institutional factors that may have encountered, and overcome, on the journey out of poverty.

Meritocratic ideologies, myths, and narratives. Despite a consistent body of research that connects various forms of capital to educational outcomes, attempts to explain inequities in educational outcomes are often dominated by functionalist's narratives. In particular, the ever popular resilient and 'hard work' narrative enforces the belief that America is a meritocracy, and thus individuals can blame or give credit to themselves for their success or lack thereof (Hochschild, 2001; McNamee et al, 2009; Downey and von Hippel and Broh, 2004; Ungar, 2004; 2012) which subsequently bolsters the "achievement ideology." Indeed, despite the fact that research clearly demonstrates that exercising a habit of hard work is not sufficient for success, studies conducted by both MacLeod (2009) and Sadovnik (2007) found that the unwavering belief in the achievement ideology encapsulates mythical notions of how to become successful in America. In fact, Sadovnik argued that the achievement ideology is successful in convincing "students and teachers that schools promote learning and sort and select students according to their abilities, not according to their social status." Furthermore, he argued that the achievement ideology "disguises the 'real' power relations within the school, which, in turn, reflect and correspond to the power relations within the larger" (Sadovnik, p. 6, 2007).

Paulo Freire long ago insisted that manipulation is one of the four primary mechanisms to maintain oppressive institutional and organizational practices. For Freire (1968), the perpetuation of these myths regarding achievement preserves the status quo.

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As these narratives are constructed, socialized, and promoted by dominant groups, the bootstrapping stories of the few individuals from oppressed groups who've 'made it' are widely circulated and held as the model for achieving success. Freire asserted that myths promoted by the dominant group are presented "by well-organized propaganda and slogans, via the mass "communications" media" (p.140).

The meritocratic myth, the achievement ideology, the America Dream, and resiliency narratives are relevant to this study as they have birthed multiple scripts on how to be successful. Functionalists believe that America is the land of plenty, where the rules, laws and treatment of people are based on character, and not on assumptions or stereotypes associated with phenotypic or genotypic traits (Sadovnik, 2007; Brantlinger, 2003; Oakes, 1985; MacLeod, 2009). The myths have become embedded in American culture (in a variety of forms from justifying colonization to explaining how one acquires wealth in America) as a means of promoting the acceptance of socially-constructed, normed behavior.

"*Success stories"*. Corcoran & Matsudaira (2005) found that despite the widening income gap in America, there "is little support for distributive policies." Corcoran et al. find that the justification lies in the belief that "everyone, regardless of race or personal income has a shot at becoming wealthy" (p. 2). Thus, a critical analysis of master narratives like this one illuminates taken for granted assumptions wrapped in the everyday language people use to talk about poverty and schools, particularly as it relates to whether blame is placed on individuals or institutions. In addition, evaluating the efficacy and intentions of master narrators can reveal patterns of submissive and dominant ideologies (Sandlin and Clark, 2009).

Sandlin and Clark examined the success stories of individuals in an adult literacy program to understand how much of the participants narratives reflected the master political narrative, rather than real economic, social, and political perceived challenges. They asserted that master narratives can reveal their influences on such organizational practices in the classroom, in addition to "providing particular frameworks on the world and templates of what it means to be a good "student," "worker," "family member," and "citizen" (p. 1005). Rather than utilizing a form of discourse analysis that would allow them to look at the ideological, moral or political intent of the participants' narratives, they employed the theoretical lens of Burke's (1962) method of pedantic criticism to illuminate how and why participants chose the master narrative over a local narrative. Burke's approach assumes that:

> language use constitutes action" and that "humans use rhetoric or language to present a particular view of our situation, just as the presentation of a play creates a certain world or situation inhabited by characters who engage in actions in a setting. (p. 1011)

Through the use of Burke's theoretical frame, Sandlin and Clark (2009) found that the participants' narratives about the adult literacy programs mirrored the political master narrative of the times. Sandlin and Clark looked at narratives from 1978-2005. The narratives from 1978-1984 mirrored that of supporting societies efforts to assist individuals financially challenged. Yet, narratives from adult literacy programs from 2001-2005 mirrored master political narratives of self-sufficiency. This was a crucial finding in Sandlin and Clark's (2009) study. This data conveyed a sense of changing realizations of agency. For the 2001-2005 group, their narratives portrayed agency as a means used to achieve the act, meaning that the adult literacy program was beneficial as a

result of the participants pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. This notion is further affirmed by the adult literacy teacher who also "attributes success to the learner rather than to the program, and, in fact, the program stays very much in the background." (p. 1020). Most importantly, Sandlin and Clark also found that the societal desire to provide the assistance needed for those in poverty is undermined by the master political narrative, particularly when the oppressed attribute their success to hard work without giving credence to the influence of social and/or cultural capital within their stories.

Pilot Study

Maxwell (2005) refers to pilot studies as exploratory studies wherein the researcher is allowed to "test ideas and methods" (p. 56). In the spring of 2011, I was fortunate to conduct a pilot study with two first-generation college graduates who grew up in poverty (with parents who did not possess a high school diploma) to test theoretical views on poverty and achievement, and to develop a better understanding of the ways in which they made meaning of their journey and overall success. The participants in the pilot study included a successful African American female and male; respectively in their mid-fifties to early sixties. One of the participants and I had an established relationship as he is my dentist. Over the years, he has shared the many challenges he faced growing up in poverty in a single parent home. The second participant was referred to me through a family member who was aware of the second participant's family and economic background. I felt that these two participants were a good place to start. I had an established relationship with one of the participants and shared a close connection with the other, which put me more at ease in testing my research questions.

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The data I gathered inform this study in two ways. First, I learned that I was looking for the participants' stories to reveal an arbitrary character trait that launched them out of poverty. Indeed, the participants did stress such character traits as drive, hard work, and determination. I also learned that it would be necessary to exercise restraint during the conduct of this study to avoid influencing the participants' narratives by divulging that research has found contradictions in the meritocracy narrative and intergenerational inequality. Therefore, in interviews conducted after the pilot study, I paid more attention to the ways in which they made meaning of their success through the potential use of a meritocracy narrative. In addition, how their meaning making intersected with notions of meritocracy and systemic issues of racism and classism.

Second, upon conducting initial interviews I learned that I was naïve in understanding the difficulty in not only recalling, but also sharing experiences in and around poverty. Despite the fact that I had known the male participant for over twelve years and the female participant for over three, the initial interview revealed uneasiness when discussing the extent of their poverty. Therefore, I felt it necessary to use a series of at least three interviews, instead of just a follow-up interview to create trust and thus a better understanding of the participants' institutional and individual experiences in and out of poverty.

Consequently, this pilot study informed my decision to have the participants listen to the initial interviews. As the participants listened to the initial interviews, I had them note particular instances that they felt were most pertinent to their overcoming poverty. The participants' findings were considered and included in the analysis of data. Allowing the participants to review their initial interview in this way differs from member checking

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in that instead of the participants ensuring I correctly captured what they said, I was able to ask them to contribute an interpretation of their own words. As a result of allowing the participants to offer an interpretation of their words, I was better able to make meaning of their success. Having their own interpretations beside me kept me mindful of not making assumptions. Consequently, the data collected in this pilot study allowed me to understand the ways in which participants' perspectives regarding how institutional and individual organizational practices may have intersected with their hard work, and their beliefs about notions of merit, in ways vastly different than they did in my life.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Tanggaard (2009) contends that "In a dialogical sense of a Bahktin approach, stories and utterances are polyphonic" [9](p. 1503). Consequently, in order to fully understand the participants' first-person accounts of their journeys out of poverty, I combined two methodological approaches (narrative inquiry and interpretive biographical methods) in an effort to better understand how the participants make meaning of their success. These approaches influenced the study's purpose and goals, as well as the data collection, analysis, and representation processes.

Methodological Approach

In this study, I examined the experiences of four adults to better understand their journey to end the cycle of generational poverty and to gain insights about how they made meaning of their success. Given my research purpose and goals, I used interpretative qualitative methods to collect the data; consequently, face-to-face interviews were central to my data collection process. Interpretive qualitative methods allow for an understanding of the ways in which, "participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon" (Merriam, 2002, p.6). Further, "this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument" (p.6). I specifically situated these interpretative

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[9] Tanggaard(2009) makes use of the term polyphonic to explain that accounts in narratives are "embedded in a context, within the specific social relationship of the interview and set against a particular cultural background" (P.1503)

methods within two approaches to qualitative inquiry: narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006) and interpretative biographical methods (Surr, 2006, Lather, 1986). Transcripts of participant interviews, as well as participant interpretations of those interviews, served as my primary forms of data. However, in an effort to richly contextualize the participants' experiences, I also conducted phone interviews with family members, former teachers, and employers. To better understand the contexts surrounding the participants' journeys, I reviewed historical and demographic data, as well as relevant documents.

My analysis of the participants' experiences was informed by both critical and dialogic perspectives. A critical approach to analysis allowed for an examination of the structures, as well as the individual agency that worked for/against the participants on their journey out of poverty. A dialogic approach to analysis allowed for multi-dimensional interpretations of narratives. Specifically, by making use of a dialogic interpretation I was able to question the ways in which the participants' defined success and made meaning of their own success. Here I employed "success" and "failure narratives," (Sandlin and Clark, 2009) and their connection to issues of race, class and a Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1930) in order to understand how much of what the participants reported about their educational journey involved discursive practices informed by a cultural script of what success looks like and how one is able to achieve it. Thus a critical and dialogic approach allowed me to examine the social, political, economic, and psychological contexts in which the participants situated the re-telling of their experiences (Merriam, 2005).

Narrative inquiry. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Studs Terkel once claimed that in an interview, "it's what a person says and how they say it, and where they're

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saying it to – to you, to themselves, to the past, the future, the outside world" (2006, as cited in *The Oral History Reader,* Parker & Terkel, p. 124-125); this is the basic text of an interview. Importantly, Tanggaard (2009) reminds us that interviews *elicit* narratives—narratives that, as Terkel suggested, are scripted, practiced, and polished for different audiences. Riessman (2008) states that, "the term 'narrative' carries many meanings and is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines, often synonymously with "story" (p. 3). In essence, our lives are shaped by a string of narratives, led and selected by arbitrary 'epistemological assumption' that Bell (2002) asserts are selected elements, patterns, or details which contribute to a set story structure that people use to make sense of experiences.

Given that narratives have varied meanings, narrative inquiry methodology allowed for a focused analysis of the participants words. Clandinin (2006) extends Turkel's perspective above by offering a three dimensional view of narrative inquiry. She contends that, "the three dimensions of the metaphoric narrative inquiry space are: the personal and social (interaction) along one dimension; past, present and future (continuity) along a second dimension; and place (situation) along a third dimension." (p. 46-47). In essence, a narrative inquiry approach made clear that the participants' narratives did not exist within a vacuum (Bahktin, 1981; Nystrand, 2002; Clandinin, 2006). In fact, narrative inquiry elucidated the retelling of experiences as being situated within a subset of social constructions and identities.

Narratives become co-created when researchers engage in the act of soliciting a story, either by asking questions or filling in blanks. Thus, the first dimension recognizes the researcher's efforts to engage storytelling by co-producing the narrative with the

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participant (Tanggaard, 2009; Riessman; 2008). This engagement is based on a cultural

script of which the researcher assumes the participant is aware (Goodson, 2006). Along

the second and third dimension of narrative inquiry, Clandinin (2006) asserts that story

construction and interpretation is not concrete. For Clandinin, narrative inquiry

recognizes that there are invisible influences of structural and individual experiences on

stories. Therefore, along the second and third dimension, narrative inquiry made clear

that interpretation is relevant to the intentional placement of narratives in certain social,

cultural, and political spaces. Indeed, it can be argued that narrative inquiry did, in fact,

illuminate that narratives are much more than just a story.

   The value of a dialogic approach to narrative inquiry. While narrative inquiry

recognizes that narratives of an individual's life have varied meanings, engaging

narrative inquiry from a dialogic perspective attempts to connect or find the narratives'

embedded meanings, and their relationship to socially-constructed master narratives.

Thus, a dialogic approach is one that is cognizant of not only paying attention to what is

said, but rather how talk is produced and how talk is informed and shaped by structural

and individual factors (Wortham, 2001). In adopting a dialogic approach to narrative

inquiry, the participants' words were not taken at face value and cultural scripts that

influenced their meaning were explored. Essentially, adopting a dialogic approach made

me keenly aware that the participants' narratives were born of a larger variety of

discourses shaped by structural beliefs and practices.

   Thus, the layered lens produced when engaging narrative inquiry from a dialogic

perspective was instrumental in not only paying attention to what was said, but also why

and how the participants formed their stories of making it out of poverty in a particular

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way. As the researcher, I was aware that people create scripts and stories to make meaning of the experiences in their lives. I was also aware that as people make meaning of their lives, in the re-telling of their stories, they are also performing what they believe successful stories should look and sound like. Performance is a part of most conversation/interaction in some shape or form. Our everyday conversations, known as social performance, follow a "cultural script," a normed way of speaking and acting, and in this case, a normed way of telling a story (Madison, 2005).

Interpretive biographical methodology. The chosen methodologies for this study were based on my belief that, as a researcher, it was my responsibility to "examine how individuals construct understandings of their lives and how they are influenced by and influence life events" (Surr, 2006, p. 285). Consequently, utilizing interpretive biographical methods served to provide, "meaning and clarification of interpretations from the research participants" (p.285). Interpretive biographical methodology was also utilized to ensure collaboration between myself and the participants', and thus validated how the participants' own interpretations of how they understand their journey out of poverty differed at times from my own.

Allen's work (1998; 2000) employing interpretive biographical methodology has been influential in elucidating the power and importance of retrieving participants' interpretations. Allen first utilized interpretive biographical methods in a 1998 study examining tenants' experiences with urban gentrification and its impact on their health. Allen utilized a paired interview process whereby after conducting the initial interview, he replayed the interview for the participants to gain clarification. In so doing, Allen extended his data gathering process by asking the participants to write down what they

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found of importance after listening to the initial interview. Allen was then able to pair the participants' interpretation with his own, giving insight into not only how narratives are constructed, but also how their interpretations can be very different.

Lather refers to interpretive biographical methods as reinforcing emancipatory knowledge. For Lather (1986), emancipatory knowledge "increases awareness of the contradictions hidden or distorted by everyday understandings, and in doing so it directs attention to the possibilities for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes" (p. 258). Therefore, informed by practices employed by Allen (1998), Lather (1986) and Surr (2006), I used a paired interview process, wherein participants were given the opportunity to provide their own interpretation of their narratives after our initial interview. Two of the participants, Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans listened back through their entire interview. Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith read through a transcript of their interview. While either listening to or reading through their interview, each participant noted what they deemed pivotal in shaping their success. I then compared my interpretation of what contributed to the participant's success based on what they said in the interview and their own written responses.

I made use of a paired interview process to ensure I understood what the participants felt attributed to their success. Miller (1978) asserts that, "One serious obstacle to the successful investigation of attributions that protect or enhance one's private self is that we do not have access to the private thoughts of the individual" (p. 1222). The paired interview process seemed prudent as an approach to gain access to the participants' 'private thoughts' as it allowed for the participants to write down what they felt attributed to their success. When participants re-visit their words, researchers have

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found that their own interpretation of what the participants may have been trying to convey has been inaccurate (Surr, 2006). Thus, the paired interview process served to explicate whether or not the participants' reported attributions to their success were either self-serving and/or the result of other supporting factors. Interestingly, each participant attributions to their success during the interview differed from what they noted while listening back through their interview. Consequently, I asked for clarification during our third and final interview on what the participants believed it took to make it out of poverty.

   Situating the study methodologically. My intention in taking up these methodological approaches was to seek out clarity and significance in the participants' narratives. In relating their stories about making it out of poverty, the participants relayed events sequentially, while also seemingly conveying a sense-making out of their experiences. As I solicited their stories, a dialogic approach to narrative inquiry, combined with interpretive biographical methods, revealed the social, political, and economic issues embedded in the telling, and the meaning the participants made of them. Thus, the onus on me as the researcher was to be cognizant of the ways in which the participants made meaning of structural and individual factors that they felt or perceived as attributable to their success. Using this method made more apparent how participants constructed their "success stories," and the ways in which their stories revealed their beliefs about how one attains success. Ultimately, this approach helped to further illuminate the various meanings contained in the participants' narratives about how they felt they made it out of poverty.

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Participants

      Selection criteria. My strategy for selecting participants took two forms. First, I employed extreme case sampling as a criterion for selecting participants. Patton (2002) defines the process of extreme (or deviant) case sampling as, "selecting cases that are information rich because they are unusual or special in some way, such as outstanding successes or notable failures" (p. 230-231). Hertz (2006) asserts that it is very difficult to make it out of poverty; thus, the participants feat in doing so is deemed significant and worthy of study. Given their success when so many are unsuccessful, I argue that they represent extreme cases. Second, I made use of criterion sampling. Patton (2002) defines criterion sampling as the researcher's attempt to, "review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance" (p. 238). The participants were selected based on several criteria. First, their background included growing up in poverty[10] with parents/guardians who did not receive a high school diploma[11]. Thus, all participants are first-generation college graduates. Second, the participants' educational background included at least a bachelor's degree. In addition, in an effort to establish consistency, the participants selected for the study had been working in their chosen middle-class, professional career[12] for at least ten years.

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[10] According to Bishaw and Macartney (2010), poverty is defined as living at or below the federally calculated poverty threshold.

[11] It is noted that the invitation letter to participate in the study (Appendix,) states 'people from households of parents with no high school education'. This is a typo. It should read 'people from households of parents with no high school diploma'. All participants met this criterion.

[12] Drawing from Anyon (1980) and Brantlinger (2003) a professional career is defined in this study by working within a field that requires at least one professional or graduate degree, being able to exhibit some level of control over one's work hours and financially making at least $60, 000 or more a year.

Participant descriptions. The study participants include three African American (two male and one female) and one White (male) professional.[13]

Dr. Jeffrey. Dr. Jeffrey is an African American dentist who has been practicing for over twenty years. He currently lives with his wife and has an adult son. Dr. Jeffrey serves as an onsite dentist at a local prison in the morning and returns to his renovated, downtown dental office in the afternoon. Dr. Jeffrey's mother cleaned and ironed clothes to provide for him and his sisters. He attended schools in Orangeburg, South Carolina receiving his bachelor's degree from Claflin University. He received his Masters of Education and dental degrees from Howard University. I've known Dr. Jeffrey's as my dentist since the age of 10. Often he and my mother would exchange poverty and triumph war stories. I would always listen as he recalled with disdain an aunt who told him he would "never be anything." Understanding and appreciating the feats Dr. Jeffrey's overcame, I was inclined to ask how he made it out of poverty to have a successful dental practice today. Dr. Jeffrey is the only participant to have attended segregated schools throughout grade and high school. Later in life, Dr. Jeffrey would attend a local historically black college. He would also obtain his Master's and Doctor of Dentistry degree from Howard University, one of the oldest and most prestigious Black universities in the nation (Graham, 1999).

Mrs. Evans. Mrs. Evans is an African American female/woman who grew up in Florence, South Carolina. When her father passed away at the age of nine, she and her older sister became solely financially supported by her mother's house cleaning job. Mrs. Evans has been an educator for over twenty years and now serves as assistant

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[13] The participant's names in this study are pseudonyms.

superintendent for a school district in South Carolina. I learned about the experiences of Mrs. Evans through a family friend. Mrs. Evans attended South Carolina State College and became the first college graduate in her family. Mrs. Evans has gone on to obtain two Master's degrees. She has also moved through the ranks of education as a teacher, curriculum coordinator, and assistant principal. Currently, she serves as an assistant superintendent. Mrs. Evans lives with her husband and has one adult son.

Mr. Seas. Mr. Seas is a White male who grew up in Barnwell, South Carolina. His father passed away unexpectedly when he was in ninth grade. I met Mr. Seas through Mr. Smith (the fourth participant). He was kind enough to share his journey out of poverty during our first meeting.   Mr. Seas received his Associates degree before obtaining his bachelor's degree from the University of South Carolina–Aiken. Mr. Seas is now an athletic director at a high school, as well as a teacher. He also serves as the town mayor. Currently he lives with his youngest child and wife. They have two sons in college.

In 1981, Mr. Seas' freshman year of high school, the National Commission on Education was created to investigate the quality of education in the United States (Gardner, 1983). The report issued vast observations of underachievement in American schools. Chief among its findings was the following:

> of high school diploma requirements reveals that only eight states require high schools to offer foreign language instruction, but none requires students to take the courses. Thirty-five States require only 1 year of mathematics, and 36 require only 1 year of science for a diploma" (National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983, p. 121).

A *Nation at Risk* was released during Mr. Seas' junior year of high school. Schools across the nation made efforts to change K-12 schooling standards from mediocre to

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exceptional (Riley, 1985; Fuhrman, 1994; Kirk, 1985). The year that Mr. Seas was set to graduate, the State of South Carolina implemented significant changes to its educational system. Requirements for a high school diploma changed. These changes included: an increase from 18 to 20 units for graduation; to participate in interscholastic activities students in grades 9–12 had to pass four academic subjects, including all required courses, and have an overall passing average in the preceding semester; high schools had to offer a clearly-defined college preparatory program; and schools were forced to increase instructional time and extend the school year from 180 days to 190 (Kirk, 1985; EIA, 1984).

Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith in an African American male and the only participant who grew up in Georgia. Mr. Smith grew up with both his mother and father in the house. He attended schools in Lincolnton, Georgia and received his bachelor's degree from South Carolina State University. An athlete since he was a little boy, Mr. Smith left college early to play professional football in Canada. He returned to college later post an injury to complete his bachelor's degree. I was introduced to Mr. Smith through a family member. He currently serves as a high school principal and lives with his wife. They have one daughter who is currently in college.

Methods of Data Collection

Interviews. Madison (2005) writes:

 interviewer and interviewee are in partnership and dialogue as they construct memory, meaning, and experience together. The primary aim of much social science research is to locate valid and reliable information, with the interviewer directing the questions and the interviewee answering them as truthfully as possible. (p. 25)

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Interviews served as the primary data collection method used in this study. Interviews were interactional spaces that allowed participants to verbally illustrate events and experiences that they deemed to have significantly impacted their life history. Glesne (2006) affirms that a good life history has the ability to demonstrate, "the uniqueness, dilemmas, and complexities of a person in such a way that it causes readers to reflect upon themselves and to bring their own situations and questions to the story" (p. 11). Essentially, the interview process is the most productive way to elicit narratives of the participants' experiences in and out of poverty.

Interviews unfolded in a semi-structured style and were audio recorded. The first interview with participants was guided by prepared questions and topics asked in an unstructured format. I began asking the participants to tell me their educational history from kindergarten to college. I was flexible in the structure of my questioning and tried to allow the interview to flow with the participant's level of comfort. I believe that the unstructured format of this first interview allowed me to build trust and helped to establish a comfortable interaction between the participants and myself. Given my understanding that the experience of poverty can be a sensitive topic, I often shared my parents' experiences with generational poverty in an effort to build rapport.

I interviewed the participants three times. Interviews took place in a location of each participant's choosing and were audio recorded. I took notes and listened intently to each participant's life history, writing down significant points, and possible questions to return to at a later time. As attempts to observe the participants in more than one setting

can generate questions for interviews, as well as corroborate interview data (Glesne, 2006), I sought to capture the participants in a personal and professional setting[14].

The first two interviews lasted 50-60 minutes. All four participants' first interviews took place at their place of employment. The second interview or meeting took place in a restaurant with Mrs. Evans, while the other three were again at their place of employment. Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans transcripts were not completed at the time of their second interview. Therefore, they were asked in the second meeting to listen back through their interview and to write down what they deemed significant in their 'making it.' To ensure that the participants truly listened to the full audio, I hand delivered the audio and remained near as the participants reviewed their interview[15]. Mr. Smith and Mr. Seas' second interviews took place after their initial interviews had been transcribed. Using the interview transcripts, they too were asked to identify the factors they deemed pertinent to their 'making it.' The last interview took place after the first interview was transcribed and I had analyzed the participants' written accounts of what they attributed to their 'making it'. In this interview, the participants were asked questions to clarify

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[14] Efforts to capture the participants in a professional and personal setting were motivated by Ochs and Capps (2001) notion of *interactional construction* in a narrative. Given my relationship with three of the participants was fairly new, attempts to interview them in a setting outside of a location that required the enactment of their professional identity seemed more advantageous to foster a more personable relationship, identity and perhaps elicit more detail about their educational narrative.

[15] Mrs. Evans analysis of her interview took place at a restaurant. After having lunch I provided Mrs. Evans with my laptop and a pair of earphones and sat with her as she listened through her entire interview. I sat beside Dr. Jeffrey in the waiting room of his dental practice as he listened through his initial interview. It is noted here that our initial interview lasted almost three hours. The first hour was filled with his educational journey from grade school to the completion of his bachelor's degree. The second hour and forty minutes is interspersed with discussions on his experiences in graduate and dental school, the meeting and marrying of his wife, people who we both know and transitions through certain places of employment, i.e. his time in the military to having his own practice. Dr. Jeffrey listened to the first hour and fifteen minutes of his interview. In Mr. Smith's office I sat with him and Mr. Seas, at different times, as they read back over their transcripts. It took them each about thirty minutes to do so.

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answers given in previous interviews/meetings. This last follow-up interview lasted 10-15 minutes.

Documents. Glesne (2006) contends that documents can serve to corroborate the participant's recollections. Second, documents can raise more questions and "shape directions for observations and interviews" (p. 65). Third, documents can provide "historical, demographic, and sometimes personal information that is unavailable from other resources" (p. 65). The collection of documents combined with the telling of the participants' journeys allowed for a two- fold analysis. I was able to find not only meaning in the participant's narrative, but I was also able to conjure up new reflections or revisit reflections and gain more detail.

Before each interview, I requested that the participant's bring documents, (i.e. awards, pictures, report cards, etc.) that may have significance to their educational journey. Mr. Seas brought two publications (one from a municipal group in South Carolina and the other from a regional campus of a local university) with him to the first interview. Both documents contained featured articles pertinent to his current career and status. Dr. Jeffrey, Mrs. Evans, and Mr. Smith were unable to locate any documents. As a result, I brought pictures of the schools Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans attended[16] to their third interviews. Prior to Mr. Seas third interview I had the opportunity to read articles about him and brought those articles with me to the third interview. These articles were key in later understanding and interpreting his definition of success. In the third interview with Mr. Smith I raised questions about the pictures in his office and awards on his wall.

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[16] Refer to appendices J-P school pictures viewed by Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans.

Family and friends interviews. To gain further contextual information about the participant's lives, I also made attempts to gain access to secondary participants. MacLeod (2009) found that "the family plays a crucial role in the process of social reproduction," (p.51) particularly in the early years. As such, engaging with secondary participants allowed me to take, in a sense, a panoramic view of the participants' interpretation of home and community experiences that contributed to their making it out of poverty. For example, by speaking to family and friends I was able to validate to what extent the participant's claims of self-efficacy, family, or extended family contributed to their success in the extension of and access to cultural and social capital? For the purpose of this study family visits were not limited to those individuals, who would normally be considered a 'blood, relative,' but also included individuals the participants deem extended family members within either their home or community. The participant's chose parents, adulthood friends, teachers, co-workers, and community members.

Interview questions for family and friends were based on how the participant believed the selected individual contributed to their testament of their journey out of poverty. These interviews lasted 5-10 minutes, were semi-structured and audio recorded. Glesne (2006) asserts that data related to family visits can be collected as an observed event or talk between the participant and the individual. Data collected from friends and family was then transcribed. As depicted in Appendix S, I was able to contact adults in supportive roles as teacher or employer for Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans. In addition, Mr. Smith gave me access to his mother.

Historical and demographic research. High school graduation, college attendance rates, and overall educational attainment in the South, and South Carolina in

particular, are relevant to this study. Examination of demographic data in the South and South Carolina shed light on the various social, political, and economic contexts in which the participants lived and ultimately were educated. For instance, from a demographic perspective, the 2009 U S Census reported that the percentage of the population with at least a high school diploma or GED was the lowest in the South, and that less than 70% of South Carolinians graduate from high school on time (Chapman, Laird, and Kewal Ramani, 2011).

South Carolina's college demographic data is similar to that of the United States. The 2011 US Census reported that about 24% of South Carolinians held a bachelor's degree or higher, in comparison with 27.9% of Americans overall. South Carolina's Budget and Control Board provides further context reporting that, in 2000, educational attainment also differed significantly by race. While 16.1% of the White population in South Carolina held a bachelor's degree, only, 6.7%, of African Americans can say the same (SCBCB, 2000).

According to Snyder (1993) in 1960, across the nation 10.5 years of schooling was about average for black males ages 25-29. Furthermore, in 1966 only about 25% of black males in this same age group had completed four years of high school (Appendix T). In 1970, less than five percent of black males in this same age group had achieved the same goal. Further, in 1975, only a little over 40% of Black females ages 25 and older had graduated from high school; in 1979 only 8% of the same demographic also obtained a college degree. By the 1980s, high school graduation percentages had increased. For instance in 1985, 80% of White males 25 and older had a high school

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diploma in comparison with 60% of black males who graduated in 1983. Furthermore, by 198e, Black males 25-29 increased college completion rates to 13%.

Moreover, the participants grew up in cities where in 2011only 20-28% of the population obtained a bachelor's degree or higher (US Census, 2011). The majority of White households in 2000 earned between $50,000 and $74,999, while the majority of African American households earned between $15,000-$24,999; moreover the average White family income was $50, 638 and the average African American family income was $28, 742 (SCBCB, 2000). From another perspective, 9.8% of White families in South Carolina earned an income greater than $100,000, in comparison with only 3.4% of African American families. Such data allowed me to better understand the many subtle adversities participants had to contend with. Use of historical and demographic data illuminated the varied contextual institutional factors which may have plagued their journey out of poverty.

I also collected academic and educational policy data as it related to the participants educational timelines from their kindergarten to college educational experiences. Since the participants are all of different ages, I found that the educational policies they experienced, as well as their social and cultural environments all varied. The collection of these various forms of data helped to address institutional factors that impacted the participants' lives, as well as corroborated the participants' recollections.

Data Analysis

Analysis of narrative. Since interviews were a primary part of my data, it was vital that I drew on interpretive methods associated with analysis of narratives. Ochs and

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Capps' *Living Narrative (2001) and* Wortham's *Narrative in Action* (2001) are both useful texts in that they provide an understanding of how narratives are multi-dimensional in meaning, maintain certain "norms" in their function and form, as well as demonstrate how people build, attack, or create images of themselves. Making use of analysis of narrative, "accounts[s] for the ways in which narratives of personal experience are realized in everyday social life around the world" (Ochs and Capps, 2001, p.54). Through this framework, I was able to examine the possible factors influencing the meaning behind the participants' words.

Wortham (2001) further claims that an analysis of narrative approach assumes an understanding that the person telling the story is not impervious to the anticipated perception of those listening. Wortham lends to Bakhtin's assertion that, "positioning accomplished by an individual speaker's utterance depends on the utterances and perspectives of other speakers" (p. 17). Throughout *Narratives in Action,* Wortham gives detailed examples, using the classroom and media, of how layered and embedded multiple meanings exist in narratives that construct, reconstruct, or reinforce an image or particular self-identity. Thus, Wortham contends that conversations are dialogic and that, "one must study how social, cultural, and relational contexts play a central role in producing the meaningfulness of experience" (p. vii).

Critical analysis. The use of a critical lens allowed for a multi-dimensional interpretation of experiences, and importantly, created space for an examination of the structures/power that worked for/against the participants in their journey to success (Riessman, 2008; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000). Given that narratives of success are normally infused with elements of master narratives (Sandlin and Clark, 2009), critical

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analysis and interpretation of such narratives opened up avenues for questioning the ways in which master narratives may reflect hegemonic notions of how one attains success. In other words, critical analysis, akin to a structural approach to analysis, helped to expose ideologies within narratives that attempted to reaffirm myths of success, infused with dominant/mainstream cultural ideologies (Riessman, 2008).

Moreover, Freire (1968) finds that myths, fueled by propaganda and slogans, only serve to maintain hegemony. Consequently, hegemony obstructs any chances of true dialogue on the factors that contributed to someone's success in ending generational poverty. Making myths transparent allow for an examination and understanding of the social, political, economic, and psychological contexts in which the participants situated the re-telling of their experiences (Merriam, 2005).

Thematic analysis. Riessman's (2008) contends that thematic analysis approach to narratives focuses more on what is said instead of "how," "to whom," and "for what purposes" (p. 54). Riessman also sees thematic analysis as linking together common patterns in the narrative. For example, Riessman discussed narratives from AA meetings where people seemed to shape their identity around the narrative of 'a recovering alcoholic.' Thus, Riessman's findings demonstrated the ways in which the individuals re-told events, and made meaning of those events, anticipating what people expect to hear about one's journey, including setbacks and triumphs, to sobriety. Therefore, I posit that the participants' narratives were shaped around themes associated with the trials and tribulations of trying to achieve certain goals. The stories they shared that centered around themes of resilience definitely emerged as an automatic response to the adversities encountered in their educational journey out of poverty.

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An awareness of the master narrative of success stories and the act of self-performance also informed my data analysis. Such an approach gave me the opportunity to draw out how people made sense of their success, and provided a space for exploring the ways in which attribution of their success reflected a continuum from a focus on their own individual acts to a combination of individual, community, and institutional factors. In addition, a thematic analysis was also useful in determining the presence of resistance or resilience in the narratives. Therefore, potential themes that informed my analysis included: factors that supported participants in getting out of poverty; timing/critical points that changed the trajectory of their lives; capital trilogy = someone in their lives who held them up to high expectations, exposed them to a different kind of life, and/or served as institutional agent; resilient narrative/script (Appendix I)

Interpretive biographical analysis. I also used a paired interview process, wherein participants were given the opportunity to provide their own interpretations of their narratives, interpretation of the participants' narratives was later paired alongside the participants to gain further understanding to the varied meanings applied to and found within their success narratives. After the participants listened to the first interview, their feedback provided clarification of their intended meanings (Surr, 2006). Thus, the participants' interpretation was paired with mine allowing for analysis of similarities, differences, and awareness of issues perhaps omitted or overlooked.

Procedures. I made use of various steps to analyze the data obtained from the participants' narratives. First, I transcribed all four interviews while simultaneously making notes of emerging themes apparent. For example, the participants talked about

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the need to be driven and the use of inner resources as a means of becoming successful. In those stories, it seemed to me that a meritocracy script was a common theme. Next, I coded the data based on five themes I found prevalent in each of the participants' narratives. The five themes included: factors that posed barriers to getting out of poverty; factors that supported participants in getting out of poverty; critical points that changed the trajectory of their lives; use and accumulation of the capital trilogy; use of American Dream or meritocracy narrative (Appendix U).

After I transcribed each interview, I assigned colors to each of the aforementioned themes. Guided by the codebook created for this study (Appendix U), I then read through each transcript and coded with corresponding colors. Upon completion of coding, I cut and pasted codes from each of the participants' interviews according to assigned categories onto poster boards (Appendix V). With the data disaggregated, I was able to determine which participants had more to say than others in regards to certain themes. Consequently, I was able to identify which themes appeared most often in the data, which in this case were factors that supported the participants in escaping generational poverty.

Methodological Considerations

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the multitude of visible effort on the part of the researcher to ensure that the data collected and analyzed are valid. Merriam (2002) agrees with Glesne (2006) on the importance of identifying verification procedures for qualitative inquiry. Triangulation is useful in validating data, as it employs multiple data collection methods as a way of checking the

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participants' stories in addition to interpretation. Glesne and Merriam both make use of Denzin's four types of triangulation methods: "multiple investigators, multiple theories, multiple data sources, or multiple methods to confirm findings" (Merriam, 2002, p. 25). My intention was to employ triangulation by making use of multiple data collection methods. For example, I corroborated the participants' narrative claims through demographic and historic analysis. Interviews with family and friends were also an additional method for confirming findings.

I also made use of interpretive biographical methods as a means of participant feedback so that the participants' words would not be misinterpreted, misrepresented, or overlooked. Surr (2006) further affirms that interpretive biographical methodology:

> is able to offer ways of removing some of the power inequalities that can exist in research interview situations. It is, therefore, in keeping with the aims of emancipatory research, which are to move from research on people, to research for and with people (p. 286)

This member checking approach (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2002) allowed me as the researcher to ensure the participants' words were represented accurately. I also made use of what Glesne (2006) refers to as an "external audit," and that Merriam identifies as a "peer review." Within an external audit or peer review context, my advisor provided an additional lens on my findings. Finally, by means of triangulation, interpretive biographical methods and member checking it, was my intention to provide rich, descriptions of the participants' lives in and out of poverty (Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 2002; Glesne, 2006). Allowing for complete and thorough descriptions of participant's lives, I believe, provided greater contextualization, giving me the ability to better determine the extent to which findings in this study can be transferred (Merriam, 2002).

Positionality. As an African American female, I shared some commonalities of race and gender with some of the participants. Being the same race of the participants made me privy to the ways in which race touched their experiences. African American participants in many cases assumed that I shared an understanding or acknowledgement of instances they felt were related to subtle and overt racist practices. In contrast, the participant with whom I did not share the same race, Mr. Seas, may have left out instances he felt I would have found offensive. Moreover, Mr. Seas may have altered statements in regards to individuals of a different race so as not to present himself as being racially biased. Also assuming an identity as a female may have prompted the one female participant, Mrs. Evans, to include narratives that indicate having to overcome or deal with sexist practices. Lastly, my background and current identification as middle class may have indicated that the participants presupposed that I adhere to certain middle class beliefs and values, thereby having a potential impact on the way in which they chose to shape the telling of their narrative out of generational poverty.

Considering I am younger than all of my participants and have been trained in the theories of critical analysis, I was more compelled than the participants in this study to look at their structural and individual experiences with a critical lens. While my relationship with the participants is one of family friend and patient (making me an 'insider'), I am well aware that expressing any differences in interpretations of data may make me an 'outsider.' The fact that I operate outside of readily accepted normative behavior and beliefs did cause discrepancies in the interpretation of data. For instance, in the case of gender Mrs. Evans did not perceive being told not to major in math because she was a female as discrimination. Mrs. Evans perceived and still sees this as an

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accepted gender norm of her time. I did not agree. In addition, in my role as patient and family friend, I do not believe I had any perceived power over the participants.

My lived experience as a child of first-generation college graduates informed my interpretations and my approach to interviews. I understand that my personal experiences necessarily stifle me in that I may have looked for certain narratives or perhaps assumed narratives should flow in a certain way, thereby inhibiting my ability to allow the telling of the participants' journey out of poverty to emerge naturally at times. On the other hand, my growing up in a household of parents who are first-generation college graduates provided me with a context to elicit narratives from the participants. In addition, learning about my parents experiences of being tracked in school and negatively labeled by issues of race and class, prepared me to be sensitive to the participants feeling comfortable to entrust me with the circumstances surrounding their experiences growing up in poverty.

Methodological limitations. I was challenged in my method of using dialogic context to the extent that I was able to understand the motivation behind one's performance of self. How much of the participants' stories about growing up in poverty did they actually share? Or, to avoid negative depictions of family members, perhaps details of stories were omitted. I am well aware that interviews in which life histories are collected required or inevitably bear discretion. This did have some bearing on how I interpret my data. However, in recognizing that in the presentation of their stories the participants may have been 'saving face' (Goffman, 1955), there is still something to be ascertained from the narratives that demonstrated experiences of classism, racism, sexism and institutional practices (Riessman, 2008). Regardless, I still view qualitative research as a useful tool in analyzing what is being said, either in regards to culture, structure,

class, or relationships. Moreover, I firmly believe that there is something valuable to be learned from these participants' views regarding what they believe is needed, or at least what gave them the opportunity, to make it. Finally, it is my hope that findings from this study will be empowering not only for the participants, but also for the marginalized group that they represent.

CHAPTER 4

EDUCATIONAL JOURNEYS OF OUT POVERTY

In this section I address the participant's educational journey from grade school to their attainment of their college degree. Given that the scope of the study pertains to how the participant's became first generation college graduates, I thought it pertinent to portray the participants' early school experiences in this chapter. Furthermore, the participants' early experiences in school revealed more about specific experiences which seemed to have the greatest influence on their ability to become a first-generation college graduate. For example, early in the participants' educational journeys, they reported school experiences where they felt their intelligence either affirmed or denied. The participants' educational narratives also revealed factors, such as people, socio-historical contexts, and arbitrary opportunities which undoubtedly impacted where they are in their occupations today. All four participants attended graduate school and spoke to their work-related experiences in the telling of their stories. In order to keep the focus here on their schooling experiences, I address experiences that occurred outside of their education in the analysis chapters.[17]

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[17] Certain participants' speech patterns reflected their tendency to say 'ah' and 'umm.' For purposes of presenting the participants' educational journey in a story format, I removed those occurrences in this section. However, I chose to retain them in the "Analysis and Discussion" chapter. In addition, in order to make the participants statements stand out, I chose to put them in italics, but will return then to normal in the final draft submitted to the Graduate School.

Mr. Seas Educational Journey from Kindergarten to Bachelor's Degree

Out of the blue! I don't know—I heard it on the news . . . I heard it somewhere so I kind of wrote and signed up to take it. Well, then I get another [letter] saying the Triple E [Education Entrance Exam] wasn't gone be offered again. Well, I called somebody at the State Department or someone in Columbia—and I asked'em, 'Now, I got this letter saying I can take this test again.' They said 'Well, you got that letter then you can take it. So I was lucky 'cause they sent it out after so many people replied to go take the test.

Mr. Seas greeted me in a baseball cap with a slow and shy smile. His easy going attire of sneakers, shorts and a collared shirt emblazoned with his school name and title and mild-mannered attitude may not lead you to first guess that he is the athletic director of a high school and the town mayor. Two goals he did not think he would accomplish growing up. Mr. Seas grew up with his two siblings and his two parents until his father passed away.

> *My parents didn't even graduate from high school. And I don't know why. We really didn't talk about why they didn't get a high school diploma. My mom went to [name of high school]. And. . . I think she went up until 10th grade. But most of them got married when they were in high school. So that—I think that had a lot to do with them [not] finishing.*

Elementary years.

His educational journey began with a troubling time period in his life. Mr. Seas found his elementary years to be a "struggle."

> *Well, elementary school I remember vaguely. You know I had some bad memories of elementary 'cause we moved around several years. While I was in elementary school, and you know I—it was a struggle that—I can remember that going from one school to another and trying to make new friends and . . . . We were in day care before school, preschool whatever.*

Mr. Seas did not address anything specific with regard to his middle school years.

Transition to High School Years.

Mr. Seas looks up at the ceiling as he tries to recall any person or incident in particular a part of his middle school educational journey. He shakes his head and seems to make a decision that his answer is firmly no. But finally affirms loudly, "I think really when I, got a freshman in high school it clicked to what I really wanted to do." Mr. Sea's new found desire to seek education after high school was fueled by a sense of wanting a better life and the desire to help out his recently widowed mother.

> *When my father died she told me I had to step up to the plate. She had to—I had to help her. And . . . I didn't have those years where teenagers get out, hang out with their friends, and get into those things that teenagers get into. You know those choices they have to make, the influences that's out there. I was more like an adult 15 year-old than a teenager.*

Despite the fact that his father worked for twenty years with his employer, Mr. Seas or his family did not receive any benefits when he died of a massive heart attack at 38 years of age. Mr. Seas recalls that they even had to pay for his father's funeral. After his father passed, the stress of taking on adult responsibilities at such an early age was eased by the preacher at their church who also served as the church's basketball team coach.

High School.

Mr. Seas not only played sports at church, but he excelled in sports at school as well. In between games and practices, Mr. Seas found athletic coaches at his high school who also helped to guide him. Mr. Seas played basketball for one of the coaches, David Jackson. He not only was a coach and a teacher, but, ". . . you know he kind of guided me when my father died in the 10th grade." Throughout high school, Mr. Seas said he attended banquets and basketball games at major arenas with his coaches and he went to them to talk about the possibilities after high school.

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Despite not having a high school diploma of her own, Mr. Seas states with certainty that his mother let him and his siblings know that she expected them to get their high school diploma. "My brother struggled," Mr. Seas recalls:

> I mean he—he was my older brother, but it took him—he didn't make his grades a couple of years, so it took him a little longer to graduate from high school. But she stayed on us about getting that diploma.

Mr. Seas doesn't know quite when it happened. But one day he took a look at the friends around him and decided "I wanted to know what it took to go to college, you know. Did you have to make a certain score on a test? Or how do you apply for . . . the next level?" Mr. Seas started researching things like the SAT, what kind of courses and testing did he need to get into college around 10th or 11th grade. He went to coach Jackson and his guidance counselor for help.

"With my situation, I had to run into it because my parents was not knowledgeable about it," he says. Mr. Seas recalls his mother saying, "she—wanted us to go to college, but when it came to that, she knew how expensive college was. She kind of left it up to us to be—you know, decide if we wanted to go that route." By the 11th grade Mr. Seas and Coach Jackson were working with the guidance office to look into post-secondary opportunities.

Mr. Seas also has memories of being the captain of his high school basketball team his senior year, but, in reflecting on what he took from his high school experience, he says:

> If I had to do it all over again I would go back to school and take all the strong courses that I could take. Sometimes when you're an athlete in school, you wanna just get by. You know, that's kinda the feeling you have. And you really don't see the results of that until you get out of high school to go to college.

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Mr. Seas did manage to accomplish the goal of getting into a two year Associate's Degree program. But he would find himself faced with another challenge. How would he pay for college?

> *My mom when I graduated from high school kind of told me if I wanted to go to college, then you'll have to pay for it because there's no way I—she could pay for it. So I—decided I wanted to go. So I took it upon myself to work and go to school. . . . my mom was very supportive once I started college. . . . far as being able to support us financially, she couldn't do that.*

College.

Mr. Seas felt the need to stay close to his family with his father no longer at home to help. So, in 1985, Mr. Seas attended a campus of the University of South Carolina (USC) to pursue an Associate's Degree. Once he completed his Associate's Degree in 1987, he set out to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Physical Education at USC Aiken. Completing his Bachelor's degree would present unexpected challenges. Mr. Seas worked his way up to his senior year in college. In 1989, he dutifully signed up for and took the Teacher Educational Entrance Exam (Triple E)[18].

> *I took that right before I was supposed to student teach and I missed by two points, so I took it again. Missed by two points. Took it for the third time and missed it by two points. Well then they called me and said you gonna have to change your major or we can't let you go into education. We can't give you a degree if you didn't pass the Triple E test. Well I'm already a senior. I couldn't understand it 'cause that's the exam they should've made me take when I entered my junior year. 'Cause then they wouldn't have let me in the education program. So I challenged that a little bit and nothing ever came of that. And I wasn't going to change my degree 'cause I had already went four years and all I had [left] was student teaching.*

Rather than start over in another discipline, Mr. Seas dropped out of college.

> *I worked in retail at the same time [I was in college] and the company let me, offered going to management training program. . . . I was only a stock boy when*

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[18] The Triple E was a standardized test designed to test novice teacher's general knowledge about school content and practices.

I started there. So I decided I could make just as much as a manager at the retail store then I could as a first year teacher. So I kind of dropped out of school and went that route.

In the spring of 1989 he decided to take the supervisor position offered to him at the retail company he worked for. Saddened by his missed time out of school, Mr. Seas proudly acknowledges "I worked my way up to assistant manager." It would be almost eight years later before he would have another chance at a Bachelor's degree.

A Fourth Chance.

"I got a letter stating—something about the Triple E, you can petition to take the Triple E again if you took it three times and couldn't pass it." In the fall of 1995, Mr. Seas was a manager at a retail store. He was married and the father of three boys. Content in his flourishing career in retail, he was faced with a decision to make when he received a letter from the State Board of Education. Mr. Seas had no intentions to re-enter school to complete his Bachelor's degree:

> *Out of the blue! I don't know—I heard it on the news . . . I heard it somewhere so I kind of wrote and signed up to take it. Well, then I get another [letter] saying the Triple E [Education Entrance Exam] was gonna be offered again. Well, I called somebody at the State Department or someone in Columbia—and I asked 'em. 'Now, I got this letter saying I can take this test again.' They said 'Well, you got that letter then you can take it. So I was lucky 'cause they sent it out after so many people replied to go take the test. And they cut off some of them. So, . . . I took the exam and made the highest score you can make on the Triple E test.*

Mr. Seas decided to retake the test. "I passed," Mr. Seas says proudly, and he boasts that he didn't even study for the test.

> *You know people have test anxieties and all, and I think that's what was my biggest thing. . . . but I passed it and that opened the door. That opened one door. I said, Now I'm [going to] go back and see what I have to do to—get my degree.*

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Passing the test after four tries may have proven to be the easiest part. When Mr. Seas left school, he had only one semester of student teaching to complete. Upon re-entering school, Mr. Seas would need to take all of the courses that were grandfathered in during the almost nine years that he was out of school.

> *So, instead of taking me a semester of student teaching, it took me a year and a half. So I quit. I quit the retail job and I went back and worked three jobs while I was going to school. I worked at an industry, I worked at a grocery store, and I substitute taught. And there was one time, I remember (laughs), I went three days without any sleep. I ended up blacking out on the highway and running into the back of someone.*

Mr. Seas says his accident was a wakeup call. He stated, "I kind of backed off some of the stuff I was doing." Mr. Seas completed his course work in a year and a half. He then had the opportunity to student teach under his athletic coach from high school, Coach Jackson. And in the spring of 1997, he received his bachelor's degree. Mr. Seas reflects for a moment. He smiles confidently as he confesses, "I didn't know what was gonna happen within that year and a half of my family—me taking that chance. But . . . I took it and I thank the Lord every day for it."

Dr. Jeffrey's Educational Journey from Kindergarten to Bachelor's Degree

'Whose Monte?' Mr. Dean asked. And I said 'Well, that's my daddy.' And he says, 'Well where's he at?' And I said, 'He's gone. He left when I was six—before I was six. He left.' — . . . so he started telling me that he knew my daddy. And he started telling me stuff that . . . they'd gone to high school together. And . . . he just took an interest in me. He wondered, he wondered what kind of grades I got.

Dr. Jeffrey's office is a reminder that he is a long way from the low-income neighborhood he knew growing up. He has also come a long way since he was deemed 'man of the house' at the young age of six–a responsibility he didn't mind having at such an early age. He confidently asserts that he did a good job stepping up as 'man of the

house,' where he had to take care of his three younger siblings while his mother worked in the laundry from 6am until 6pm. He recalled, "We had a two bedroom house. We had six, four kids and one adult." Sometimes he and his sisters had to move in with his grandparents if his mother did not have enough money:

> *. . . at my grandma and granddaddy's house, they only had two bedrooms. And [at] times we had to move back with them—so that means there was the five of us, plus the two of them, in two bedrooms. So you see how that worked. For a while there was no running water, no inside bathroom.*

In the neighborhood of his youth, he saw people fighting; people on drugs and alcohol. Dr. Jeffrey may have been influenced by the fighting, but drugs were never his choice of recreational activity. "I stayed away from drugs. I wanted to be in control at all times. You know, that's me—I want to be in control," he said.

Today, almost sixty years later, he sits in his office–a 1,200 square foot renovated, Columbia Cottage, encased in a wraparound porch. Wooden floors catch the sound of your steps as you walk from the waiting to patient rooms. A mahogany armoire holds a flat screen television to occupy client's attention as they wait their turn. But with the volume on the television muted, footsteps and the ringing of the office phone occupy the room now. Dr. Jeffrey, in his creased slacks and light-colored polo shirt, comfortably leans in a navy blue leather chair. His hands are crossed in his lap. He remembers well his experiences in school.

Elementary and Middle.

Dr. Jeffrey asserts, "I did well in school. No one ever helped me with anything, I just always grasped it. And my grades were always good." Dr. Jeffrey does not hesitate to push out his chest as he adds that he loved school because it came so easy for him. He

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also revels in the fact that he always loved to read. He attributes his love of reading comic or fiction books, and regular library attendance, to the days he saw his father reading. Although his father left his mother when he was only six years old, his memories of him include spankings, favoritism toward his sisters, *and* constantly reading books. "You know . . . I just read. To me it was an escape for what was happening back at home in the neighborhood and stuff like that . . ." he recalls.

Around this age, Dr. Jeffrey recalls his father making the decision to leave his mother and their family. Dr. Jeffrey doesn't recall begging his father to stay or feeling saddened by his decision to announce to his mother, in front of his siblings, that he was leaving. Instead, he says he let his father know that he and his sisters and mother didn't need him and that his father could leave.

> *And he sat there and told us, 'I don't want nothing to do with you any more—I will—I'm leaving you and the children.' You know she's twenty-three years old. She's crying, four kids. 'What am I gonna do?' So at that point . . . I said, 'Well, let him go. Let him go. I'm gonna take care of you. I'm gonna go in the Army and make some money.'*

Dr. Jeffrey laughs modestly about his six year old proclamation. He insists that he knew nothing really about what the Army had to offer at that age. But, he was sure it could help him take care of his family in his father's absence. And, in fact, he did. Dr. Jeffrey laughs to himself as he recollects watching his three little sisters while his mom worked.

> *I'm the oldest of four and the only boy. And . . . I could change her diaper at five years old, six years old. I'm babysitting. I knew when it was time to eat—. . . . I remember . . . this whistle would go off around twelve every day and there was a mill somewhere close by downtown Orangeburg. And—that's when they ate lunch. And that's when I would let my sisters eat lunch. But I could give Laverne whatever she wanted, any time—the milk and stuff like that in between. . . . the bottles were made and I knew how to warm them. I knew how to—I could put it on the stovetop and put it in a thing of water. And boil. She told me what to do, she told me one time, and you know the bottles were made up and I knew when to give it to her and everything and I—would check her and change her when she*

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needed to be changed. But then my grandma was never too far away . . . she would sort of keep an eye on us sometimes. But I was in charge of everybody, always in charge . . . from the time he left.

Dr. Jeffrey brief stint as 'man of the house' was interrupted when he started school in 1952. Beginning at age six, Dr. Jeffrey recalls, "I didn't have kindergarten went straight to first grade. Couldn't tie my shoes, couldn't do anything, had no experience with school what so ever." For reasons unknown to Dr. Jeffrey, he was sent to live with his uncle and cousins. It was there he began school, out of town.

> *My . . . mom sent me from Orangeburg out to a little town called Rowesville, south of Orangeburg. They had—like two grades or three grades in one class. And so, some of the children had been to school a year before. So I would sort of watch what they were doing and just sort of caught on, you know? And, I learned how to write and spell little things and would always try to watch what was happening with the other children.*

After his year in kindergarten in a nearby small town, Dr. Jeffrey returned home for the remainder of his grade school education. Few teachers in elementary and middle school standout to Dr. Jeffrey and he has no explanation for another move during the second half of his second grade school year.

All of Dr. Jeffrey's grade school teachers were African American. But, one African American male, who knew his father and happened to be a teacher, befriended him at a young age. All throughout his educational narrative, Dr. Jeffrey shared stories of how Thomas Dean really impacted his life.

> *Well, he used to ask me about grades. 'What kind of grades you getting?' I'd say, 'As and Bs.' And he'd say, ;Why aren't you getting all As?' And I'd say, 'Well, well I don't know. I just made some As, I think that's good enough.' And he'd say 'That's not good enough.' (laughing) 'Is that your best? Probably not.' And he'd talk and he'd catch me and always check on me and my grades and so forth. He wondered . . . what kind of grades I got because—he told me some stories about my daddy . . . they played football together and how my daddy would do everybody—everybody's homework on the football team and charge them for it.*

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On the footsteps of stories about Mr. Dean, Dr. Jeffrey mentions two more people who would also follow him throughout his educational career. Dr. Bethel, who at the time served as a professor and eventual Dean of Agriculture at South Carolina State College, and his wife formed a relationship with Dr. Jeffrey that would also last the rest of his life.

> *She [Mrs. Bethel] would ask me questions about what I was doing, how I was doing. You know, I guess the kind of interest a mother would have in a child. . . . that's just the way she was. And . . . even when I was in college, I still would go by there and see her. If I didn't go by there, she'd call me. . . . By this time, she and Mr. Dean would have connected and he would sort of give them reports as to what I was doing.*

High School.

Dr. Jeffrey did not enter the ninth grade with college on his mind. Attending college was not encouraged by his mother and grandparents. He stated, "Education was a high school diploma. That was their idea of an education was a high school diploma." From a young age, he had strongly considered the military as an option. But advice from a newly enlisted cousin not to enter gave him second thoughts. Once Dr. Jeffrey reached high school, his good grades streak hit a slight slump, but he scored 1100 on the SAT, which according to Dr. Jeffrey, "was a pretty decent score during that time because the average score in the black population was probably about 750." Dr. Jeffrey attributes this feat to his love of reading over the years. But Dr. Jeffrey admits his grades weren't as stellar as they once were due to the trouble he constantly stayed in at school.

> *With grades, your based on conduct half the time. I'd get into—outspoken—[I]would say what's on my mind. And I would question people. 'Well, why did he get this grade and he made a 90 and I made a 90 but I got a C?' '. . . Your mouth.' You're not supposed to grade me on my mouth, you know? I'd get—end up getting kicked out of class. Go to the principal's office and sit around.*

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Accustomed to the letting teachers know how he felt, Dr. Jeffrey recalls a time when he

was put out of class for questioning the teacher about the demographics and rigor of the

class.

> *Well, he had all the—in his case, he has all the thugs. You know it—he did very little teaching. He did a lot of discipline. And . . . somehow I got dumped in with the thugs because I guess . . . I came from the wrong side of town. I got dumped in with them. And I looked around one day and says 'You know, I'm not gonna stay here,' and he looked at me and he said 'What you said?' I said , 'I'm not gonna stay here.' . . . (slight laugh) He says 'What you gon' do, where you going?' I said. 'Well I'ma leave here that's what I'm gonna do.' I said 'Look, what you got here man, you got thugs in here.' [Laughing] You got thugs in here—we're not gonna learn anything in here. So I got to the door and he stood in front of the door like this [Laughing].*

I asked him, "And you didn't go back?" and he answered, "No, I didn't go back." This

incident caused Dr. Jeffrey to look for a biology class more to his intellectual liking. Dr.

Jeffrey stops the motion of his swinging foot, laughs, and pounds the adjacent coffee

table before he recounts his switch to another biology class.

> *I stole me one of those little cards. It was this little thing we used to fill out. I called it—the first time you had to go to class you had to submit these things. And I stole one—I always kept extras. I stole one and . . . went on to Stephen's class. I knew he— in his class, . . . they were the so called brighter kids. And . . . they were gonna learn some stuff. 'Cause I . . .kids know teachers who teach and you, you know—didn't teach. Well they would do a pre-registration thing in the summer months or before we got there. But we had to at least go to class to turn the little card in, then they put you on the roll. But there were kids who—we could steal the little cards and just write them out ourselves. And we were in there for about thirty days before they realized we were supposed to be somewhere else.*

Dr. Jeffrey feels strongly that the teachers allowed him to stay in the classes he self-

transferred into because of his ability to use the thirty days to prove himself

academically. He admits, with a slight chuckle, that there is no question that, in the

current age of technology, he would have been quickly ousted from his unassigned

classes. But he was able to re-write his high school academic schedule every year once he learned the system.

> *And I would go every year and take the classes I want. You know . . . they . . .had a vocational curriculum, you had a college prep curriculum, and you had something— I guess a technical curriculum, which was like for trade schools. And . . . the college prep, you get the French and the foreign languages and so forth to prepare you to go to college. You know and take the SAT and all that kind of stuff I guess. And then you have that technical trade area there that they would teach you a little bit of college stuff, but you'd get the trade like brick masonry, carpentry, and all that kind of stuff . . . . then you get a group of kids— I don't know, they were just on a track and they were on that lower track—and they just stayed there. They never—didn't figure out how to get them out. This group of kids stayed together. And—the tracking system was in place. You know . . . once you're in that certain track, you stay there in most cases even in high school.*

Once Dr. Jeffrey was sent out of class and to the principal's office, he usually got sent home. Dr. Jeffrey admits unabashedly that his mother was not aware of his suspensions. While Dr. Jeffrey's worked, his grandmother would return him to school or perhaps if his suspension spanned a few days, Mr. Dean would find ways to occupy his time.

> *So, . . . he would come get me and, say if I had 5 days suspension, he would—I'd sit with him for five days. And help him tutor his kids in math. He taught math and . . . drafting, which I took from him and something called diversified occupations. [It] would introduce you to various occupations . . . technical stuff.*

By the eleventh grade, Mr. Dean had Dr. Jeffrey fulfill the role of substitute when he was out sick, in addition to allowing him to tutor his students. He was also called upon by the basketball coach from time to time who taught biology.

As Dr. Jeffrey approached his senior year, he was resigned to accomplish completing his high school diploma–an educational goal set forth by his mother and grandparents. Recalling his cousin's advice, Dr. Jeffrey eventually followed Mr. Dean's recommendation when he questioned him about his plans after high school. Mr. Dean's guidance kept Dr. Jeffrey out of the military and essentially the ongoing Vietnam War.

'What you gone major in?' . . .I wasn't going to go to school. 'You got to go to school.' . . . He said—'What do you want to do?' 'Pick up a trade, trade school.' And . . . he said 'No, that won't keep you out of the military. The war is going on and you're going to get drafted. You need to go to college.' I finally—what happened next? Oh, I would take the SAT. He sent the application in for me to take the SAT. Went by my little job he'd gotten for me at the TV repair shop and took my check. I wasn't making but $35 a week.

After having 'forgiven' Mr. Dean for 'taking' his money to pay for the SAT and scoring very well, Dr. Jeffrey ended up with two choices for college. Dr. Bethel was able to obtain a scholarship for Dr. Jeffrey to attend South Carolina State University. But because his girlfriend at the time was attending Claflin College, he decided that's where he was going to school. Initially, his major would've been history. But, a conversation with Mr. Dean before he started school changed his mind"

'What you gonna major in?' I said, 'Oh history,' or something. . . .He said, 'History—right now no jobs in history. What you gone do, go to law school? I said 'No.' I said, 'Law school?!'[laughter] You're out of your mind. So then he said 'You need to find another—' I said 'What about social science?' He said, 'No, that's history as far as I'm concerned'. So I ended up in biology. And . . . I didn't do the educational part of it, but I did professional biology at Claflin.

Dr. Jeffrey said it was a decision he made simply to keep Mr. Dean's 'mouth closed.' Regardless, if Dr. Jeffrey wasn't convinced college was the right decision, he knew that he didn't want to be drafted. *'Cause I was sure I would get drafted. Because everybody was getting drafted and I said well you know, . . . if your average didn't drop below, I guess a 'C' or a 'C+' then you get your— you could get deferment back during that time.*

College.

Once in college, Dr. Jeffrey received encouragement to complete his Bachelor's degree from his mother, grandparents, and extended family. He would join the same fraternity as Mr. Dean–Kappa Alpha Psi. While in college, he was invited by the same

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two cousins he stayed with in first grade (who had since moved up North) to come live

with them during the summer months and make extra money while he was in school.

One summer day, Dr. Jeffrey approached one of his older cousins and informed him that

he thought he'd make more money if he continued to work and did not see the need to

return to school.

> *[I] told him, I got a job with a telephone company and they were paying $500 a week, which was 1967, '68, something like that. I was junior. And I told him I wasn't going back to school. I wasn't, no, I wasn't going to go back to school, to college. . . . He said, 'Why not?' I said, 'Because I'm making $500 a week." . . .I says, 'Now what job can make me $500 a week?' That's a lot of money to me, $500 a week? And it was a lot of money in the '60's. And he said 'Well, I tell you what. If you're not going back to school then you're going to have to pay rent. Or you can't live here with me. 'Cause the purpose of you being here is to have money so you can pay your way to school. But if you're not going to school, then you can't live here free, you're going to have to pay some rent. So you make a choice, you have a choice.' And he said, 'When September comes, [it's] time for you to go to school—you gotta be gone if you're not gonna go back, you got to find your own place.'*

Dr. Jeffrey made the choice to return to school and he graduated with a degree in biology

in 1970.

Mr. Smith's Educational Journey from Kindergarten to Bachelor's Degree

> *So, that's when a lot of students started bombarding [the] guidance counselors' office: 'Look, what do I need to do to? Where am I now? How can I get there? How can I take these exams? What do I need to prepare myself?' We start asking questions that we didn't ask before. Because someone else had educated us about what it took to move forward education wise.*

Mr. Smith greeted me with a hug and a toothy smile. He offers compliments and

good-natured banter as often as he does his laughter. Tall and thin, he sits comfortably in

the leather swivel chair behind the desk that consumes one half of his office. "I'm a

people person,' he says. 'I don't meet strangers. Never have. I take everybody face value,

everybody good people." It is summer time and the bustling high school is quiet. Mr.

Smith assures me that I have his full attention. As we begin to walk through his

educational journey, he shakes his head at the mention of attending a formal daycare or

preschool program:

> *. . . when I was real small, before we started school . . .this older couple used to keep me and my sister. They was babysitters for myself and my sisters. We used to get up every morning [and]my mom always— we took our breakfast and that was it.*

Elementary.

Mr. Smith's early childhood years were filled with many family memories of his parents

working hard and being leaders in the community. However, teachers' names and early

experiences with schooling during this period of his life are faint in his memory,

particularly in comparison to his parents' contributions:

> *And that's one thing I always—we've always said in my family [that] my mom was always a leader. . . . Both my parents to me was leaders. . . . My mom, being a seamstress, one thing about it, working in a plant . . . you can make production . . . you know sewing whatever. Making jackets or clothing—don't make a difference what type of clothing she had to make, she always production, production, production, production and it wasn't but one or two people in the whole plant that could make production on anything they gave them.*

He reflected on his parent's views about school:

> *We didn't have things like parents sit down and read books to you. . . . parents sit down and help you with your homework. They didn't have the education to do it. In college, my mom and dad—well everything I did, from elementary, middle, to high school, I was always supported. Me and my other siblings [were] always supported no matter what we was involved in, they were there. . . . my dad never came to the school for academic things, but he was always asking me how you doing in school. Stuff like that.*

But as he looks me in the eye, Mr. Smith acclaims:

> *All of us had perfect attendance. My parents believed in us going to school. . . . my parents both was . . . didn't finish high school. They had to drop out from school to go to work, in the workforce, to help their parents because of the fact that money was not plentiful. But [they] had to keep food on the table, do things*

that was sufficient for the children. So, they didn't have an education, but I know they valued and made sure that we go to school. That's one thing I can say, my mom and dad—me my sisters—I had one brother and two sisters. All of us had perfect attendance.

Mr. Smith's elementary and middle school years are full of good memories he had going to, and being a part of, program, at church.

. . . you had to go off during the summer. I'll never forget. We had jobs that was in 4H club, Rock Eagle. You would go off there and be a cook, you wash dishes or something, but you went off for the summer and you came back. You know, you saved your little money after summer and that's what you bought school clothing with and that's one of the things we had as far as a job for high school.

In reflection on his family chores, Mr. Smith recalled:

When I was home . . . first thing in the morning, I had to get up. I had to make a fire. Second thing after I made the fire I had to go— I had to feed the hogs. I'm talking 'bout before I go to school. You talking 'bout 6 o'clock in the morning. Every morning, not some. That was some of my chores that I had to do. It was automatic, that wasn't no question.

High School.

Framed pictures of Mr. Smith on golf courses and other sports memorabilia are placed along different shelves of Mr. Smith's office. Mr. Smith's still youthful build and recent frames and plaques displaying his participation in recent sporting events leaves little question as to whether or not Mr. Smith has left his athletic days behind. Mr. Smith has been playing sports since he was a little boy. He was encouraged to play by his coaches, but he says they mentioned little about college:

Most of the little league coaches were guys, community guys that would always say, . . . man, you gone be real good when you get to high school, but that's far as they went . . . They didn't say, 'Hey man you going to college. You keep that up, you gone do this—you gone do that.' That never came across—never—they talked about from pee wee league, to midget mite to middle school to high school. They stopped, because that's all they knew. That's it.

The same interest in athletics that Mr. Smith carries today is what motivated him to

attend college.

> *. . . in the ninth grade . . . with high aspirations of doing things and didn't know where I was headed . . . really didn't know—didn't know. And the end of my ninth grade year is when I decided that I felt like I just had the athletic ability to move forward to college or whatever. That was my dream–to move on from high school to college. But my parents didn't have the funds for it.*

Yet Mr. Smith smiles as he recalls being inspired by a former teammate. He stated, "At

the end of my tenth grade year . . . we had a coach that came to my school from . . . from

Columbia, South Carolina. He inspired him to go on to college." Mr. Smith's inspiration

led him to request a visit to a nearby college his junior year of high school.

> *In those days, you had one black coach and you had the rest white coaches. And so I went to the black coach [and] I said, 'Do you think you can persuade coach [head coach], talk with him let us go to a game over in South Carolina to ummm see Jesse play?' He said, 'Man I don't know—we won't be able to go.' I said, 'Well can you ask?' [He] say he was gonna ask. So, one day I went back down to the office. I sat in the office. And I asked him [head coach] again. He said, 'Well, I think it'll be alright if coach take y'all—the black coach. I said, 'Well cool.' So I went back and told him [Black coach] I said, 'Well yes, you—.if you take us ,we can go.' . . . He said he would take us. First time we went to Orangeburg, South Carolina from Lincolnton, Georgia. We think we in the big city. Stadium full and, you know, all these people—. . . So we go down on the field. That's my junior year. And I think State was playing against Morris Brown. They beat them 82 to nothing. So I had a good time. Junior year of high school, never been on a college campus. Aww man, pretty girls. I said, 'Man let me tell you, I'm going to college. I'm going here.' And that was all I could see.*

Mr. Smith made an appointment with his school guidance counselor. It was there he met

Mrs. Wise.

> *And we had a guidance counselor move into the area, the rural area where I'm from. She was from Greenwood, South Carolina. She . . . went to college, moved in and tried to help. And she did help a lot of students in that area and that's when a lot of students there went to college. She inspired a lot of students from . . . Lincoln County high school to go onto college and try to be successful as young people.*

Mr. Smith was also encouraged to attend college by college football programs. He counts off with pride the many colleges and universities who sought his athletic ability for their football team. But his visit to South Carolina State one weekend, where he was heavily courted by coaches, helped him decide, without a doubt, where he wanted to go to college.

> *So senior year came on. . . . and I had offers to Mississippi State, University of Georgia, University of South Carolina, and Tennessee. I had all these colleges— wanna sign me—I went to visit South Carolina State—my first visit—had a good time. You know, they show you a good time and all that good stuff. Coach brought us in that Sunday morning and said okay I want to know who gone sign. I said, 'I'm telling you right now I'm signing. I'm signing.' So I signed to go to South Carolina State.*

College.

Mr. Smith enjoyed his days in college. He joined a fraternity–Omega Psi Phi–and otherwise felt he adapted well to balancing his academic and football schedule. Mr. Smith shakes his head in frustration as his recalls the many people who either attended college when he did or soon after who dropped out.

> *And you could see as plain as day the guys that was not going to make it. You could see the guys that were going to separate themselves. They could not follow what was expected. So when you see guys that not gonna follow what is expected, you know what comes next. Either they gone drop by the wayside and not gonna be a part of it —or they gone go home. And I used to get so upset when a young man used to leave and leave a note in his room and say 'It's so hard to be a Bulldog. Gone home!' Gone home? Throw the whole scholarship away? I just used to get so upset. I say, 'How can you do that?'*

Mr. Smith on the other hand had no problem with keeping the teams morning and evening football schedule.

> *I like my college coaches because of the fact that, to me, they was fair. And what I mean by that is, when they brought you in and they told you, 'Everybody here got 8 o'clock class. And you must go to breakfast.' You know, you on your own, you figure I have a 10 o'clock class, I'm a sleep till 9. You must go to practice in*

the mornings. We had practice on Monday mornings, Wednesday mornings, 5 am— You left practice and went to breakfast. 7 o'clock was breakfast. So what they did was, when school started, they automatically tell you, 'You go to breakfast every morning. This is what you going to do. We gone have dorm checks.'

And his face fills with pride as he leans deeper into his chair and professes that, in spite of his parents having to work long hard hours, they made a way to see him play football on the weekends.

But on Friday nights, I don't care what kind of athletic event we was involved in . . . he [his father] was there to support —he was always there. I went to college— always there. My dad, my mom, my family—bus loads coming from my hometown, were there.

Eventually, his football talents landed him a spot on a Canadian Football team. Mr. Smith would be the second person from his hometown to play for the Canadian league. His football talent led him to leave college before he completed his degree. He played five years on a Canadian professional football team. Mr. Smith looks off, perhaps reminiscing. Then he continues:

. . . and I really enjoyed that. I got hurt. I hurt my fifth metatarsal, fractured my foot. And what happened? I came back to the states and had a little money. I was having a good time. I was flying all over the place, New York—I would just jump on the plane fly to New York. You know just have fun and leave there and go to Florida, leave Florida and go to New Orleans. I'm saying I just go to all over.

Mr. Smith adds, with much laughter, that his fun would come to an end as did his money. He took up an offer from a friend who'd previously asked him about a position at a high school. Mr. Smith initial response of no was rescinded. His decision would also find him back in college to complete the remaining credits of his degree in 1988.

Mrs. Evans' Educational Journey from Kindergarten to Bachelor's Degree

My mom talked to us about college. I knew I wanted to go to college. I—I think there was just something internally from way back when, when my dad assisted me with learning and it was his goal, and I knew it had to be my goal. And my mom, I watched how hard she had worked for such few dollars. And how she made sure we had everything we needed, whether she had it or not. And I didn't want my life to be that way. And I knew, in order to do better, I had to go to college. 'Cause everybody I knew, at that time, who had better opportunities had been to college. So it was something I knew I had to do.

Mrs. Evans sat in her plush, leather brown chair. Her small frame was almost covered by the heavy, glossy desk in her office. Book cases lined the walls with educator manuals, books on elementary education and leadership, and framed pictures of her family. Mrs. Evans was called upon several times during our interview. We were interrupted by requests for her to answer questions about testing, about what she'd like her secretary to grab her for lunch, and to speak directly with the superintendent about a pressing manner. Each time, Mrs. Evans transitioned between interviewee and assistant superintendent without hesitation. Mrs. Evans apologizes in her soft, slow, pleasant drawl for the few interruptions. But behind her apology is a sense that she enjoys being called upon for her skills and expertise.

Mrs. Evans' father passed away at an early age. Her mother was left to raise two children on the single income of a laundress. Mrs. Evans says that despite her mother's financial challenges, she still managed to have a happy life.

Elementary.

Mrs. Evans begins her educational journey with reflections of spending all day long with her father. Initially, she began her education with a community educator in the neighborhood.

> Sooo, I remember going to Ms. Sarah-Frances' kindergarten program. And I evidently started before I was 5. I think I was sent because it was someone my mom knew and I'm assuming that the Black community respected Ms. Sarah Frances, and so most children were sent there in my area, as well as other sides of Florence.

When the time came for her older sister to attend first grade, Mrs. Evans begged her parents to allow her to stay at home. No longer able to enjoy the comforts of going to school with her big sister, Mrs. Evans parents granted her request. But, even though she'd be staying at home, Mrs. Evans education did not stop. Instead of going to Ms. Sarah-Frances, her retired father would take over her education.

> Because my dad was so much older—than my mom, he had retired from his job at that time and had these two little girls and he loved his precious little girls. And so he said I can teach my child. So when Anne [her sister] would bring home— my older sister would bring her books home because, at that time, everybody used Dick, Jane, Sally . . . so she would bring her books home and that would make up my dad's—he didn't call them this—lesson plans for us. And I remember him buying this big chalkboard and we had it in the living room and he taught me eeeveryday out of Anne's books.

Mrs. Evans stayed at home with her father that year and when it came time for her to enter first grade, she was offered the option to skip a grade.

> But my parents—they were I guess—even though they weren't educated, they looked at other things and they didn't think that, maturity-wise, that I was ready to go to second grade, so they would not allow the principals and the teachers to put me in second grade. They felt as though I needed to go through first grade and have the learning experiences with those children. So even if though they were not educated people, they had the insight to know what kinds of things their children needed to be successful.

On one occasion in second grade, Mrs. Evans recalls being forced to eat spinach. She'd taken the advice of a fellow classmate to hide her unwanted spinach in her milk carton. Her teacher found out and made her eat the milk-soaked spinach:

> *I remember crying because I didn't want to eat it, but she made me eat it. And I know it was healthy but—ummm. And I don't remember my parents being upset with her about doing that because she was the teacher and they accepted the fact that she knew what was right. She was the school's dietician. — I should've eaten it. I shouldn't have put it in my milk carton.*

Perhaps reluctant at first to go to school, Mrs. Evans states that she eventually loved school. She loved to play with the other children, as well as her position on the 'A' row throughout elementary school.

> *I distinctly remember it at my school. My teacher had a 'A' row of children, a 'B' row, a 'C' row, a 'D' row and a 'F' row. And I was on the 'A' row. So we were really technically grouped homogeneously to a certain degree waay back then. But,—I guess maybe it shouldn't have been done, but we were grouped way back then. But I enjoyed it. [I] never felt like I was getting the same information over again.*

Unfortunately, by the time Mrs. Evans reached second grade her father passed away unexpectedly. Mrs. Evans and her family were left for a while without a second income. This tragic incident affected Mrs. Evans' family in many ways. Mrs. Evans tears up and her voice breaks as she remembers not being able to afford lunch sometimes at school.

> *Cause I remember many days, as a little girl once my dad died, sitting—and I hope I don't cry—sitting outside of the principal's office, Mr. Vernon, 'cause I didn't have money for lunch. 'Cause my mom couldn't afford it, because when my dad died. . . . and so I sat there many days having to wait on Mr. Vernon to say, 'Yeah you can eat free today' or 'We're drawing up a bill for your mom to pay for your lunch.'*

Mrs. Evans also confesses to being a shy child for a while. She recalls vividly one teacher in particular who helped her with her shyness. In third grade, Mrs. Evans

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recalls the many school plays and productions put on by her school. She smiles as she

remembers that students were required to learn all of their lines in order to participate in

the play.

> *And I'll never forget that Ms. Telly was the first one who let me be in one of the*
> *plays. And I was the second lead character in the play. And I guess because I*
> *knew what was needed I learned everybody's part. Not just mine. . . . I can*
> *remember being on the stage that day when the lead person forgot one of her*
> *lines and I was mouthing to her what her line was so we could go on and she let*
> *me lead the devotion for the play that day. She just—she saw me in a different*
> *eyesight, and . . . she—gave me a dollar because I didn't miss any days that*
> *school year. I had perfect attendance. So I saved that in a yearbook— in like a*
> *little photograph book.*

Mrs. Evans also recalled with a laughter and unabashed pride a time when a

teacher left her in charge of the classroom in her brief absence:

> *One day she walked back in class, . . .[the] teacher would leave the class because*
> *we knew how to behave. But we were up and talking and she said, 'Y'all aren't*
> *going to get into trouble today. Because Kim [Mrs. Evans] is up with everybody*
> *else.' So nobody. . . nobody got in trouble that day because I was up playing and*
> *talking with everybody else because I was just so shy and quiet.*

Mrs. Evans also remembers more than Ms. Telly's kind acts. Ms. Telly's

wardrobe apparently made a huge impression on Mrs. Evans as well.

> *I think I really adored her so much because she knew how to dress as a teacher.*
> *She is one of my teachers that I remember her outfits, her shoes would match, her*
> *hair was gorgeous every day. And I said, 'Oh I'm going to grow up and be like*
> *her.' And even to today, anybody who knows me can tell you I make sure my*
> *outfits [sic] look good.*

Mrs. Evans proceeds to run through the invisible list in her mind of teachers that

she can remember. For a moment, she resigns to the fact that she cannot remember any

more. Then, as if she saw a ghost, Mrs. Evans swivels in her chair, turns to look at me,

and says:

> *Oh yes I do. Ms. McPherson. Ohh and she was tooouggh. I do remember her. I*
> *think all of the teachers were tough at my elementary school because they*

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expected so much from us. It was almost like, 'You all have to achieve this'. They didn't give us a choice in it. They made sure we achieved high standards because if we didn't, they were going to call our parents. And then our parents were going to make an effort to either see that teacher or take care of us with a paddle or a belt. Because, in my elementary school, you were paddled if you got out of control.

Mrs. Evans remembers one last teacher before she entered middle school:

. . . sixth grade was Ms. Keith. And ohhh, woohhh—was Ms. Keith tough. Ooooo, she was tough, tough, tough. But I can remember like—I know people say was it memorization, but I think it helped me. We had to learn different poems and different things like—I remember her requiring us to learn the Gettysburg Address, Paul Revere's Ride, just different things like that we had to do those things and stand up in front of the whole class and repeat those things to different people. And I think that just helped. We today say that's not good. But, I think it helped me. Because now children don't know the Gettysburg Address, they don't know anything about Paul Revere's Ride. . . . the emphasis was just on so many things that we had to learn. Ummm, we learned information about all fifty states. We had to develop these booklets that showed state flower, state motto, state symbol. You know everything, and I just—I feel as though that helped me a lot. I think—it led me—or led my mind—or guided my mind the way I needed to go to understand different things.

Middle School.

Mrs. Evans educational journey included her reports of attending segregated schools for a majority of her schooling experiences. Initially South Carolina took to improving African American schools exterior in an effort to appear compliant with federal law. Essentially, they used aesthetic efforts as a means to halt desegregating schools (Mizell, 1974). Mizell notes that, "In 1967, 7% of all the Black students in the state's public schools were in desegregated schools; in 1968 the percentage increased to 15%; and in 1969 it nearly doubled to 29%" (Mizell, 1974, p. 5)[19]. However, it wasn't until the federal government applied pressure to South Carolina schools by demanding

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[19] See appendices Q and R

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they desegregate or cease receiving federal funding that schools began to comply. In addition, the federal courts ruled in 1969 (Alexander *v*. Holmes Count) that 'all deliberate speed' would not suffice; schools were forced to then implement desegregation immediately. In 1969, Mrs. Evans entered a desegregated middle school. In addition, Mrs. Evans entered college in 1975 when parts of Title IX had been clarified. Thus her educational narrative differed from the other three male participants in terms of a changing educational context as it related to gender. The happy tone in Mrs. Evans voice as she recount her early grade school teachers disappears when she reaches her middle school years. In a slow and low tone, Mrs. Evans responds, "I'd probably say my junior high years weren't quite as happy as my elementary years." Up until this point, Mrs. Evans experiences with school and schooling had been with the 'community educator,' and her elementary school, both of which included African American teachers.

Mrs. Evans is candid in her admission that she initially was not happy when she was forced to attend a newly desegregated school as she started off her seventh grade year.

> *And when I was in sixth grade, the guidance counselors from Henry came and tested all the children at Blade School because they were going to start integration and, when I ended up at Henry, nooone of my African American friends were in my classes.*

At Henry, she had one African American female teacher.

> *I just—I guess I wanted more from her that she didn't give me. And maybe she shouldn't have as the teacher. As I grew up, truly the only Caucasian people I knew was the lady my mom worked for . . . whose house my mom cleaned and she kept her children and went to the beach with her. I was the only African American girl and one African American male who transferred from the North. Everybody else in my classes were Caucasian. I went home and cried daily because I wanted to be out. It's not that anybody had taught me against Caucasians, but I had never been around White people, except for the lady my mom worked for. And I probably saw them in that way but, my mom said, 'You're*

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going to stay in that class because education is important.' She made me stay and I guess I'm happy today that she—decided I'm not going to change you and put you with your friends because you can handle these classes. Soooo, my year started off not real happy going to junior—junior high school cause I was this little shy girl and then I got put into that situation and phew—it was hard.

The next year proved to be better as she returned her eighth grade year to the new friends she'd made the previous year. Mrs. Evans admits that she missed going to the same school as the friends she'd grown up with and her older sister. She stated that her, '*middle school teachers were not my favorite teachers.'* Yet, the one African American male teacher, who taught math, stood out to her.

> *Mr. Able who was my math teacher . . .math became my favorite subject. I loved math. And I'll never forget, we had numerous competitions that I won in the area of math. But math was my favorite subject, and . . .—I can't say that he was this person that just overwhelmed me. I just liked math.*

High School.

When Mrs. Evans entered high school, she was able to meet back up with some of her friends and her sister. It was also during this time that Mrs. Evans remembers her mother mentioning college.

> *She—she—by the time I got to high school, maybe the end of middle school, she started talking about college and about being a teacher. 'Cause way back then, that's what Black folks did. You became teachers, preachers, one or the other.*

She also recalls assistance from a guidance counselor who took a liking to her:

> *But Ms. Miles knew. She just knew I could do well and she was the person who set out to get me various scholarships. I'll never forget her coming to me saying, 'I want you to apply for this. I want you to apply for this. Kim, go to Mr. Davis. He's a English teacher. Make sure he helps you with your letters that you write.' She made sure that I ended up with some scholarships because she knew my family would not have been able to afford to send me off to college. So—and I graduated high school a year early.*

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College.

First, Mrs. Evans shares how she decided on her major:

And I really wanted to major in math because I loooved math from my junior high experiences. But my mom said you need to be an elementary teacher, because I was a girl. And nobody had thought about girls majoring in math. And so, since I was the child who listened to what my mom said, I went in to elementary education. And loved every bit of it. But I tell people, if I had a chance to do it again, I would've majored in math.

Mrs. Evans shares that she joined Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority in college. Beyond that, she does not share any other social experiences. Mrs. Evans says she was focused. Her recollections of college include being asked by professors to change her major to math. Mrs. Evans says she was approached by her professors upon doing so well on a test.

And when I went to college, my science professors tried to get me to change my major. And I'll never forget my Caucasian science professors coming to me wanting me to change my major. But I wouldn't because my mom said 'You go to school to be an elementary teacher.' So, see I just wonder—I wonder how my li— but you know what? I think about it and I don't think about it because I realize that my life, the plan for my life was decided by God. And this is the track He wanted me to take. Because, otherwise, it would have changed at some point. And it never did. Even with those professors coming to me make me change my major from elementary education to science or math, I still didn't do it. —so I feel like I went on the right track. I really do.

Mrs. Evans was fortunate not to have to work while she was in college. She says she had enough scholarships and grants. Perhaps this allowed her to complete what many are not able to do–graduate in three and a half years in 1979.

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CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I use portions of the data to respond to the study's guiding

research questions:

 1. How do four adults (three African American, one White) who grew up in

generational poverty articulate their journey out of poverty?

a. What are the educational stories they tell as a part of this journey?

b. What are the work-related stories they tell as a part of this journey[20]?

2. What are the factors or influences to which they attribute significance in telling

their story of their journey out of poverty?

3. How do they make meaning of their own success in ending generational

poverty?

Research Question 1: How do four adults who grew up in generational poverty articulate their journey out of poverty? [21]

In response to the first research question, I address important aspects of how the

participants articulate their educational journey by elucidating the institutional or

individual barriers they faced and overcame. Employing the notion of resilience (Ungar,

2004), I offer an analysis of the participants' responses, situated within adversity, staying

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[20] For the purposes of re-presentation I felt that the participants' responses for this sub-question were better
positioned in research question three.

[21] In order to make the participants statements stand out, I chose to put them in italics, but will return then
to normal in the final draft submitted to the Graduate School.

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mindful of the ways in which each participants' educational journey is related to a particular socio-historical context. I pay particular attention to factors, influences, and protective processes that served to positively adapt their attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors. Rutter (1993) defines protective processes as falling into four main categories:

(a) Those that reduce the risk impact by virtue of effects on the riskiness itself or through alteration of exposure to, or involvement in, the risk;

(b) Those that reduce the likelihood of negative chain reactions stemming from the risk encounter;

(c) Those that promote self-esteem and self-efficacy[22] through the availability of secure and supported personal relationships or success in task accomplishment;

(d) Those that open up opportunities of a positive kind. (p. 630)[23]

Parts of my response to the first research question address the types of protective processes the participants encountered. First, I provide examples of the challenges or adversity the participants faced either at home, in school or within their community. Second, I illustrate the participants' development of resilient responses to the adversity. Third, I argue the need for including context (i.e., experiences, people involved or associated with the response and/or protective processes), when assessing how resilience in the participants evolved. In addressing this question, I also speak in part to the second research question, as it relates to factors that influenced the telling of their educational

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[22] Self-esteem and self-efficacy are defined in this study as one having the belief that they are intelligent, capable, proud of what one has been able to accomplish and decidedly that one can and will be able to accomplish more.

[23] Opportunities of a 'positive kind' for this study refer to access or extension of social capital networks, exposure to new experiences and/or relationships built around genuine care and concern.

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journey, as well as to the third research question as it relates to participants' meaning making of their ability to achieve success and what it takes to become successful.

Facing adversity: Responses, resilience, and protective process experiences.
The participants' journeys out of poverty appeared to be embedded with notions of resiliency in response to multiple adversities. Importantly, their narratives also seemed to reveal their perception of how well they were able to adapt or 'win' against a specified adversity. Because these themes of adversity and resilience intersect throughout the participants' narrative, I combine these aspects in response to my first question. I recognize that portions of this response are also applicable in answering subsequent research questions.

The participants in this study overwhelmingly reported that they were able to be resilient in the face of adversity. The notion of resilience has been studied as a factor in either contributing to and/or determining success as early as the 1970s (Ryff, 2012). Early studies of resilience focused on the children of parents who were either mentally ill or grew up in poverty (Condly, 2006; Sameroff, Seifer, Zax, Garmezy, 1982; Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000; Elder, 1994; Conger, R, Conger, K, Elder, Lorenz, Simons, Whitbeck, 1992). According to current literature, resilience is primarily based on the capacity of the individual to maintain a positive healthy psychological well-being despite growing up in, or being subjected to, an environment of perceived stressful factors (Rutter, 1993; Ryff, 2012; Condly, 2006, Ungar, 2012; Ungar, 2004; Schilling, 2008). Moreover, Schilling (2008) found that, "determining if someone displays a resilient profile encompasses two judgments—adversity and adaptation. Adversity is often evaluated according to negative

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life circumstances statistically related to adjustment difficulties" (p. 296). In this case, poverty clearly serves as a reasonably perceived adversity.

Consequently, I begin with the participants reporting of resilience as it pertains to parental, school, and community adversities paralleled with their explanations of their adaptation. Oftentimes their narratives included their interpretation of how intrinsic assets such as drive and determinism assisted in ending their generational position in poverty[24].

Dr. Jeffrey reported that his father left his family when he was between five and six years of age. When his father announced his impending absence to the family, Dr. Jeffrey stated that he let his father know he was no longer needed if he didn't want to stay. Moreover, his reflections shed light on how he felt his adverse relationship with his father motivated him to do better in life. Dr. Jeffrey seemed to have some amount of empathy for his father's downfalls, as seen in his rationalization that perhaps his father didn't have anyone to show him 'a better life'. In addition, despite his father's drinking, gambling and leaving his mother to take care of four young children on her own, Dr. Jeffrey mentioned briefly how he likened his ability to do well in school to that of his father. Dr. Jeffrey also conveyed a sense of determinism and drive upon witnessing years and years of his mother struggling financially.

> *My daddy…my daddy, I don't know. My daddy just had no interest in doing anything positive. You know he liked to drink…I guess because he didn't have anybody to let him know there was a better life besides drinking and partying, you know gambling and stuff and things of that nature. And…after I grew...after I grew up along the way people would tell me, "you're just like daddy". Because everything always came easy to me in school. Annnd, they would tell me that your gonna be just like him. And, and I knew I didn't want to be like him. And so I took the negatives, and sort of made it you know, just the opposite.*

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[24] Aspects of the participants educational journey that refer to drive and determinism will be discussed in more detail later as it pertains to question three.

Similarly, Mrs. Evans also demonstrated resilience as a response to adversity in her recollection of witnessing her mother's hard work. She stated, " . . . I watched how hard she had worked for such few dollars, and how she made sure we had everything we needed whether she had it or not. And I didn't want my life to be that way." Mr. Seas also shared that his mother's working hard for little pay fueled his desire for a better life:

> *Well I saw how my parents struggled with their jobs, working in industry job, coming home barely can, making ends meet. And I said, if I ever get the opportunity I'll never be in that situation. And I think that kind of motivated me and my drive on getting my education and trying to go a different route.*

Despite witnessing and facing adversity, none of the participants reported feeling discouraged or hopeless that there life would not be any different from their parents. The participants' proclamations of believing they would always make it out of poverty seems counterintuitive given that literature has consistently found that, since the 1970s, children are typically prone to repeat the income of their father (Bowles & Gintis, 2002)[25].

Moreover, since the participants' did not communicate any doubts regarding their ability to make it out of poverty, their views diverge from the literature which argues that oftentimes, "young people construct views of reality within the material and cultural contexts of their lives, and that these contexts are shaped partly by the status groups to which they belong" (Grant & Sleeter, 1986, p. 196).

Typically, children in poverty do not fare well in school (Books, 2004; Kozol, 2005; MacLeod, 2009; Gorski, 2006; Condly 2006). Challenges of inferior resources, a curriculum that lacks rigor, and highly unqualified teachers makes for a culminating educational experience that leaves many unprepared for a chance to succeed in higher

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[25] Given that, during the early periods of intergenerational research, women did not work outside of the home, it is understandable as to why Bowles and Gintis found the fathers income as a comparable measure for potential or future offspring income or wealth.

education. In addition, social factors of such as racism, classism, and sexism constantly intersect in ways that enhance adversity for children in poverty (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Berlak, 2001; Bohn, 2006). Consequently, Condly (2006) asserts, "a class of children who defy the conventional wisdom and not only survive hostile environments but also actually thrive; these are the resilient" (p. 212-213).

Initially, positivist views of resilience were deemed a part of valid and sufficient explanations as to why children were able to adapt in adverse circumstances (Ungar, 2012).   Such views upheld claims that, "those who are disadvantaged are expected to exercise personal agency in regard to accessing their psychological functioning" (Ungar, 2012, p. 13). Furthermore, Condly (2006) asserted that, "Research has shown that resilient adults typically attribute their status to a dogged determinism, held throughout childhood, that they would conquer their circumstances, that they were people of worth and value, and that they had the inner resources to succeed" (p. 219-220). Not only did the participants mention displaying attributes of determinism[26], but embedded in their responses were also reports of protective processes that supported their responses to adversities, thereby supporting their maintenance of a healthy psychological well-being.

Intelligence as a response to adversity. Additional evidence of the participant's resilient responses to adversity presented itself in their narratives related to their perceived intelligence. Dr. Jeffrey stated that he did not attend kindergarten and that upon starting first grade, he could not even tie his shoes and had no experience with school. Yet he conveyed a long held belief that he knew he wanted to learn. Dr. Jeffrey

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[26] The participant's use of such inner resources as determinism and drive will be discussed in more detail as it pertain to the third research question.

shared that he watched the older children in the one room elementary classroom, which allowed him to "catch on."

Similarly, Mrs. Evans revealed that she did not attend a formal kindergarten. Instead she attended the educational program of a woman in the community. Once her older sister moved to the public school, Mrs. Evans was no longer forced to attend the 'community program.' She was taught at home by her retired father from the books her sister would bring home from school. Mrs. Evans connected this event at the age of five as impressing upon her the importance of school. Upon beginning school Mrs. Evans recalled that the school offered her parents the option of allowing her to skip a grade, an option that her parents would later decline due to their belief in the need for Mrs. Evans to stay with her age group. A decision she stated she still agrees with.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Jeffrey's love of learning was fostered at an early age, though not through traditional middle-class means (Anyon, 1981). I suggest that Dr. Jeffrey initially attending a school where he was in a class full of older children indicates he may have had access to a rigorous curriculum. Similarly, Mrs. Evans one-on-one time with her father for an entire school year may have had an impact on her 'A' tracking as early as elementary school. Through his use of her older sister's books, Mrs. Evans was taught by her father using books of her older sister. Seemingly, not only did Mrs. Evans have one-on-one attention from her father, but she also had the opportunity to learn material a grade level ahead of where she was supposed to be academically. Mrs. Evans beginning schooling experiences at home with a stay-at-home parent mirrored that of most contemporary middle to upper middle class students (Lareau, 2003).

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This finding diverges from the literature which argues that children in poverty are more likely to experience parents with limited or low educational preparation (Engle & Tinto, 2008). It is clear here that, despite the fact that Mrs. Evans' father did not finish high school, he apparently knew more than enough to assist in providing a strong educational foundation for his daughter. I suggest then that Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans early educational experiences may have been full of academic rigor. If so, their experiences support recent studies which indicate that when children receive a default rigorous curriculum[27] (Boutte, 2008; Ali & Jenkins, 2002; Cavanagh, 2005: D'Souza, 2009) they benefit from it. Further, Ali & Jenkins (2002) found that, "nationwide, students enrolled in higher-rigor curricula improve their skills, are better prepared for the workforce, test at higher levels, and have significantly greater persistence in postsecondary education" (p. 3).

It is important to note here that research demonstrates that intelligence is not a significant enough cause or motive to prompt children in poverty to adapt positively to adversity (Sroufe & Egeland & Carlson & Collins, 2009). Moreover, Bowles and Gintis (2002) point out that while, "genetic transmission of earnings-enhancing traits appears to play a role, the genetic transmission of IQ appears to be relatively unimportant" (p. 5). The fact that Dr. Jeffrey recalled that he was smart like his father more than likely did not contribute greatly to his continued resilience in school. Condly (2006) supports this line of reasoning, asserting that:

> High intelligence alone is insufficient for protection against stress; the increased awareness of the miserable circumstances in which resilient children find themselves can serve to exacerbate their misery. What is also needed is a

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[27] A default rigorous curriculum refers to eradicating a system of tracking and instead implementing a curriculum that includes extending all students the same level of rigor.

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temperament that renders them akin to velvet-covered steel: soft to the touch outside but strong inside to provide necessary support in times of stress. Their intelligence and temperament interact so as to allow them to understand a situation well, seek out coping mechanisms, not feel sorry for themselves (and thus incur a paralyzing emotional effect), and persist in their attempts to survive and survive well (p. 220)

Resilience as evolving within context. As demonstrated in their stories, participants' educational journeys, broadly situated in notions of resilience, reflected adversities, protective processes and socio-cultural issues that impacted their schooling and environment. Consequently, examples of each are interspersed below. I begin by examining how resilience evolved in the participants' lives, paying attention to social, cultural, political, and economic factors, and the way in which such factors have the potential to support or erode resilient responses to adversity.

I first make use of systems theory, having its roots in developmental psychology, in order to better understand the participants' abilities to constantly evolve in their acts of resilience, despite adversity. Next, I utilize a social ecological approach to better understand how specific macro and micro social, cultural, political factors did not succeed in eroding the participants evolving resilience. I employ both conceptual frameworks as the literature clearly points to resilience as a means to *describe* someone's response to adversity, not as a means to *explain* how one was able to persevere (Sroufe et al., 2009; Rutter, 2012; Garmezy, 1974; 1985; 1993).

Rutter (1993) argues that much in the same way one would build up resistance to a disease with small doses of vaccination over the years, so does a person facing adversity. Thus, I take the approach of looking at the participants' developmental process of adaptation or protection, in doses, from grade school to college. Rutter also argues that "resistance to infection comes from the experience of coping successfully

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with lesser doses, or modified versions, of the pathogen" (p. 627). Consequently, a resilient response develops or becomes fine-tuned early in life based on experiences that foster a sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and success (Rutter, 2012). Thus, I seek to understand how the participants' development of positive adaptations contributed to their self-esteem and efficacy.

To begin my analysis, I start with Sroufe et al (2009) explanation of resilience to frame my analysis of the participants' educational journeys. They assert, " While it [resilience] becomes in time a defining feature of some individuals, it is better thought of as the product of the child's experiential history, and ongoing supports and stresses, not as an inherent, immutable characteristic" (p. 227). Sroufe et al conclude, "Moreover, resilience is not just based on characteristics of a freestanding person; it also depends on historical and ongoing supports. Thus, in our view, resilience is not an individual trait but a feature of the developmental system" (p. 227).

This developmental system, Sroufe et al. (2009) contend, began when the participants were infants. They base their findings on their thirty-year longitudinal study of children born in Minnesota to families of first-time mothers. Their findings included children who experienced secure attachment or positive early histories with their primary parent or caregiver proved to be capable of overcoming problems faster and, "less likely to evolve problem behavior in the face of stress than those with unsupportive histories" (p. 226). Indeed, each participant reported loving their parents and grandparents, which could indicate positive familial experiences prior to school.

Dr. Jeffrey tied the adversity of his father abandoning him and his family with his ability to exercise self-efficacy in taking care of his sisters while his mother worked:

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She told me what to do, she told me one time and you know the bottles were made up and I knew when to give it to her and everything and I would check her and change her when she needed to be changed. But then my grandma was never too far away. Yeah, you know she was never too far away. And ahhh. . .she would sort of keep an eye on us sometimes. But I was in charge of everybody, always in charge, ahhh from the time he left.

And again when he assisted his grandmother with things she needed read or written:

Yeah. From the time I was a little boy, 'cause I was always reading and writing and stuff and ahh her eyesight started going bad on her, when I was about in the 3rd or 4th grade. And I would write her, help her write her letters. Writer her letters for her. And ahh she had a brother that lived in Pittsburgh. And I would help her write to him. Stamps were 2 cents apiece.

Later in life, when Dr. Jeffrey worked during high school and college, he professed more

success with being able to help his family financially:

I ahh, I always thought work, I always figure out how to work and little monies and stuff to cut lawns and stuff like that and give it to her. I'd give it to her. And I say you need this for the girls and I don't need it.

He also reported successfully defending his immediate family from potential predators.

Dr. Jeffrey shared an instance of standing up to his aunt. Dr. Jeffrey recalled, that his aunt

would prey on his mother's inability to tell people 'no'

My mom was easy going. Like she was, this aunt she traded her car, she got a new car every year or every year and a half or two, very year she'd get a new..or they'd repossess it or something. Every year she had a new car. And then she'd make these loans and stuff and she'd want my mom to co-sign. And I think when I was about 15, yeah, she wanted my mom to co-sign on a loan. I told her mom, you can't do that. Because when she doesn't pay, she's not going to pay, you gotta pay it, 'cause you co-signed that loan. And you know that, 'cause you paid it the last time, the last time, you're crying, figuring out how to do this with this amount of money and I'm helping you. I'm not paying the loan for them. You don't need to go sign your name. And of course my aunt, she came anyway. And that's when she told..umm my mom said Eugene doesn't want me to go. Because you default on the loan, you don't pay. He's got to help me and he said he's not doing it. So, I'm not going 'cause you didn't do it the last time. I'm gone pay, I'm gone pay. Said, you know that boy doesn't have good sense. [laughs]

Dr. Jeffrey went on to report that with his mother sitting there crying, he threatened to

assault his aunt with a bat upon her threat to slap him.

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I says which hand you don't want? I said now which hand you don't want? Or which arm you don't want, 'cause I'm gone take it off with this bat here if you slap me. Matter of fact I'm gone take the whole side of your body off. [laughs]

He also stated his use of violence to solve problems was a way for him to survive which seems to explain his proclivity to exert violence in situations of adversity.

Dr. Jeffrey also attested that he learned to stand up for himself from his grandfather, his mother's father:

Cause my granddaddy, my moms dad, my moms…dad. Told me, said you're the oldest you gotta take care of everybody, so you're going to have to fight. He said the bigs come along, their going to pick on you. Oh, I was probably eight, nine. He says you're going to…if big guy comes along and he, sounds like he want to fight, talking about fighting, or he's teasing you, he said then just jump on him. and hit him. He said you might get an ass whipping every once in a while, but he's no, he's not going to mess with you. And so jump on him. He said you gone lose sometimes. But jump on him. So pretty soon, word got around that I had this hot temper.

While it is probably safe to assume that Dr. Jeffrey's part-time job at a television repair shop and cutting lawns were not sufficient enough to maintain major household bills, it is obvious that he was and still is proud of that fact that he was able to successfully feel as that he contributed, whereas his absent father did not. Notions of self-efficacy and self-esteem are also indicated in Dr. Jeffrey's narrative regarding the aunt to whom he stood up when he was a teenager for constantly put him down while he was growing up.

Yeah she lived nearby, everybody disliked her. She was mean. And ahhh, She'd always say negative things to me. You just like your daddy. You're no good. And then she would say ah, you're going to be dead or in jail by the time you reach 21. You will never be a free person.

Dr. Jeffrey reports that his aunt delivered insults to him all of his life. Yet, even as a teenager he attests to being able to stand up to his aunt, when his mother could/did not. Dr. Jeffrey shared that she was the only relative to say cruel things to him and that he did not let his mother or grandmother know when such incidences occurred. Alluding to its

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impact on him, Dr. Jeffrey went on to express, "You never do that to a child. You know?"

A recent study by Stanford affirms Dr. Jeffrey's sentiment. In a study middle school White and Latino students (Yeager, Walton, Cohen, 2013), researchers saw improvement in the ways Latino students adapted to stress at school (in the form of identity issues or a sense of belonging) when they were given specifically-timed "values affirmation" assignments in class (i.e. students reflected on things they were good at or that were important to them). The researchers believed that such affirmations serve to counteract any feelings of stereotype threat. Significantly, in comparison to a control group, the researchers saw a change in the achievement gap. Moreover, the gains the Latino students experienced in their grades persisted for three more years.

Mr. Seas also tied the adversity of his father's untimely passing to the development of his self-efficacy. He shared that his father's passing also contributed to his determination to do better in school. He stated, "When my father died she [his mother] told me I had to step up to the plate. She had to . . . I had to help her." Mr. Seas reported that, as the second oldest child, he fulfilled many tasks for his mother:

> *I washed all the clothes. I folded clothes. I . . . we had chores. But when my father died . . . we. I remember one incident where we lived in a mobile home. And when the cold hit our pipes froze up and they all . . . most of them burst. So my mom calls a plumber. She gets it fixed. And when she got the bill, she say, you need to get under there and learn how to do that yourself. And I did. I got on their next time they burst I changed all the pipes out and fixed it and she didn't have to call the plumber.*

In addition, Mr. Smith shared early experiences in self-efficacy. At the age of five he learned how to cut wood for the fireplace and stove from his babysitters.

> *You know I think back and they taught me so many different things of how to deal in life. When my parents were working. Like for instance I never know how you*

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supposed to cut wood, to put in the fireplace, cut wood to put in the stove that you had to cook on. I didn't know how to do that. But I was trained to do that very since I was like four and five.

Mr. Smith also boasted of responsibilities placed upon him by his parents throughout his youth. These responsibilities had to be taken care of daily, including starting a fire for his family and feeding the family's hogs. Mr. Smith stated that these responsibilities provided him with the skills to practice self-discipline:

Discipline was something I had no problem with. I don't care how hot it was or how cold I had no problem with discipline. But it started at home. It didn't start at school. My discipline started at home because of the fact that I had a certain time that I had to do things. Like I was telling you, had to feed hogs it was certain time I had to feed them every morning.

I draw from Rutter 's(2012) analysis of Elder's (1974) study of children of the Great Depression to offer an analysis of how Dr. Jeffrey's early experiences as caregiver, Mr. Seas experiences helping his mother and Mr. Smith's responsibility to feed hogs contributed to their developing notion of resilience. Seemingly, the participant's narratives parallel here in demonstrating early experiences of self-efficacy. Elder's findings of children studied during the Great Depression illustrated that "whereas younger children [meaning siblings being cared for] tended to fare poorly, adolescents were sometimes strengthened by the experience of having to take on adult roles and doing so successfully"(p. 338). Furthermore, "the adolescents with greater maturity and experience were better able to take on responsibilities and succeed; finding that they could succeed made them more resilient" (Rutter, 2012,p. 338).

Resilience in context. I would be remiss not consider the ways in which changing context (i.e. experiences, events and people, etc.) shaped the participants response to adversity as positive or maladaptive. Consideration of changing contexts

serves to illuminate how certain incidences for the participants seemed to either erode or evolve their inclination to respond in a resilient manner. Accordingly, a social ecological approach (Ungar, 2012), where the development of resilience is seen as being connected to a changing context, is the next approach I employ in framing the participants' educational journeys.

In doing so, I keep three concepts central in using this approach. First, a theoretical lens that utilizes a social ecological approach allows for awareness of socio-historical context. As Ungar (2012) contends, such an approach undergirds the importance of the ways in which resilience evolves based on interaction with one's "social and physical environment making as the locus of resources for personal growth" (p. 15). Second, this approach is counter-positivist. A social ecological approach offers a constructionist interpretation in that it challenges the dominant view that resilience is innate - an all or nothing magical attribute possessed by a few in adverse situations. Moreover, it explicates events of the past and present that may have directly or indirectly impacted the participants' lives. As Elder (1994) has shown, an in-depth look at one's 'life course' makes apparent that, "especially in rapidly changing societies, differences in birth year expose individuals to different historical worlds, with their constraints and options. Individual life courses may well reflect these different times" (p. 5).

Finally, a social ecological frame gives consideration to how, when and why protective processes, considered to be demonstrated when experiences help redirect a potential risk into a more potentially positive adaptive responses, enter the lives of children in adverse situations (Rutter, 1993). Schilling (2008) and Ungar (2012) also find that context is extremely important to consider when investigating resilience in the lives

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of children who have shown positive adaptation to adversity. Schilling asserts that this is particularly so given that, "Access to resources, family support, and diverse experiences tend to bolster opportunities for more advantaged adolescents" (p. 297).

A social ecological frame comes from the life course paradigm. The life course paradigm "refers to the interweave of age-graded trajectories, such as work careers and family pathways, that are subject to changing conditions and future options, and to short-term transitions ranging from leaving school to retirement (Elder, 1994, p. 5). Furthermore, the life course paradigm argues four themes should be utilized when analyzing one's life's trajectory: the interplay of human lives and historical times, the timing of lives, linked or interdependent lives, and human agency in choice making (Elder, 1994). For the purposes of research question number one, I focus on themes one and two. The third and fourth theme will be addressed more specifically in questions two and three.

In analyzing the development of resilience in relation to protective processes and a changing context I frame my analysis around race and gender discrimination in society. I first consider the passing of *Brown v. Board* in 1954. Many schools in the South did not immediately enforce desegregation of schools. Mrs. Evan and Dr. Jeffrey experienced attending segregated African American schools. However, Mrs. Evans experienced desegregated schools in the seventh grade and beyond. I begin with her educational journey first as it relates to resilience in the context of race and gender.

Mrs. Evans schooling experiences before first grade occurred with a woman who ran a type of preschool in her community. Afterwards Mrs. Evans was taught by her retired father. Mrs. Evans recalled her all African American teachers well during her

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elementary school years. Many of whom she seemed to have had positive experiences with. In her segregated school environment Mrs. Evans stated that she was encouraged to come out of her shyness.

> *Most people can't believe that now. But . . . I was just totally shy. And so I really enjoy . . . and I wonder if I wasn't that shy would it have been that enjoyable to me. But it was, just because of my characteristics. I enjoyed school.*

According to Mrs. Evans her third grade teacher was able to break her of her shy personality:

> *I looooved Ms. Towsend. Ohhh, she was wonderful. She is one person who tried to get me to overcome my shyness. Because I guess I remember . . . in my elementary school we would have all these plays, these productions and children had to have parts and you had to learn all your lines.*

Mrs. Evans reported that many teachers in her segregated African American school were big on discipline. She shared an unpleasant experience of being forced by a second grade teacher to eat milk-soaked spinach. But, overall, Mrs. Evans seemed to feel that despite this negative experience, she enjoyed school and felt that most teachers expected a lot academically.

> *I think all of the teachers were tough at my elementary school. Because they expected so much from us. It was almost like you all have to achieve this. They didn't give us a choice in it. And you got no inflated grades back then, I, 'cause I'ma tell you those black teachers I had in elementary school, they, they played nothing but the truth. Nothing -but –the- truth.*

In Dr. Jeffrey's and Mrs. Evans' interviews, they revealed that the desegregated schools they attended also held lessons on etiquette. When asked about learning validated customs, rituals, or traditions associated with middle-class behavior, Dr. Jeffrey remembered that etiquette classes were a normal part of their curriculum:

> *Well . . . it was a part of your training. You know you taking you some place you were . . . they showed you how to set the table. They showed you how to hold a fork. What to eat with what fork, whatever. But this was taught to me in*

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elementary school in Norris. 'Bout the third, fourth grade somewhere back there, I think. They would demonstrate. They would have silverware and stuff there. Set the table.

The African American participants in this study recalled learning middle class notions of etiquette at school or in the church. These experiences align with the literature that position the African American community as a conduit for providing a multitude of cultural capital resources to students (Walker, 2000; Austen-Smith & Fryer, 2005). In essence, for Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans, the school offered lessons/information outside of what would probably be considered a typical school curriculum of letters and numbers. In Mr. Smith's case, the church offered lessons outside of catechism. The participants were offered lessons in etiquette as a result of coming into contact with people aware and willing to pass on to them these specific forms of dominant codes, rituals, and behaviors (Wouters, 1995).

Walker's (2000) research supports this phenomenon. In her study of African American schools and teachers during segregation, she found that it was not uncommon for African American teachers and principals in particular to act in this manner. In fact, teaching information outside the scope of the curriculum included "health, human relations, civic responsibility, worthy home-membership, command of fundamental processes, and workmanship" (p. 268).

Mrs. Evans school experiences with solely African American teachers and students—a result of segregation policies—ended in 1969 when she entered middle school. She stated, "When I was in sixth grade, the guidance counselors from Putnam came and tested all the children at Blade School because they were going to start

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integration." The experiences Mrs. Evans shared regarding her transition in seventh

grade to a desegregated school were not positive

> *I'd probably say my junior high years weren't quite as happy as my elementary years. Nooone of my African American friends were in my classes. As I grew up, truly the only Caucasian people I knew was the lady my mom worked for. I was the only African American girl and one African American male who transferred from the North. Everybody else in my classes were Caucasian. I went home and cried daily. Because I wanted to be out . . . it's not that anybody had taught me against Caucasians, but I had never been around White people, except for the lady my mom worked for. And I probably saw them in that way but, my mom said you're going to stay in that class because education is important. She made me stay and I guess I'm happy today that she decided I'm not going to change you and put you with your friends because you can handle these classes.*

In attending to context, I think it is also important to note here that, at this time in Mrs.

Evans' life, she reported that her family financial situation improved. As Mrs. Evans

shared that her mother discovered she was able to receive benefits, at least a whole five

years after her father's passing.

> *My dad worked at the railroad, my mom wasn't educated enough to know when he first died that she could go there and apply to get us a check every month because of his retirement. And of course nobody from the railroad was coming to tell us we owe you a check every month and that didn't happen until I was in middle school that my mom realized, "I can get money from my husband's retirement for my children."*

First, Mrs. Evans experiences in her new school are described around her acute

awareness that she was one of a few African Americans in the class. Mrs. Evans

interpreted seeing Caucasian people in a certain way connected with labor, particularly

servant type labor. This may suggest that Mrs. Evans was aware of hegemonic notions

(Wells, 2009). In essence that she was not a part of the dominant group. Brantlinger

(2003), Freire (1968), Delpit (1988), and Stanton-Salazaar (1997) all attest to codes of

power reinforced by the dominant group. In this case, the White teachers and students

were the dominant group thereby creating an environment of subtle validations of White-

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middle class culture. If Ms. Evans interaction with White people was limited, this could mean that she was not familiar with the codes or rules for participating in the 'culture of power.' Delpit (1988) argues that the 'culture of power' can be seen as "linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting" (p. 25).

Mrs. Evans supposedly had little experience with understanding the 'culture of power' due to the fact that her interaction with peers and educators was mostly in her own African American community. In addition, Boutte, Hopkins & Waklatsi, (2008) extend this notion, arguing that, "It is assumed that most U.S. classrooms represent established power structures that put forth ideologies that represent the dominant culture "(p. 943). It is understandable then why Mrs. Evans would attest to feeling like she was in a school environment that did not support her racial identity (Jackson & Boutte, 2009). For these reason I interpret Mrs. Evans experiences in desegregating as potentially adverse.

Second, Mrs. Evans recollection of testing indicates that she may have tested into a certain track (Oakes, 1985). Standardized testing in schools began as a way to determine students who may or may not be academically ready for a rigorous curriculum. Knowing that Mrs. Evans was already placed in the 'A' track throughout her elementary school years, it is plausible that she tested in what may be considered an "honors" or "gifted and talented" curriculum today. Moreover, many studies indicate that public schools were developed based on a social system that would uphold the middle class cultural values of White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (Sadovnik, 2007; Collins, 1971; Kaestle, 1983; Spring, 2004).

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Coupled with the fact that "Public schools in the U.S. were originally designed for a homogenous group of children with a common culture, values, morals, ambitions, and parental expectations," (Ford, 1998, p. 13) it is understandable that the change in social settings could prove an added adversity for Mrs. Evans. Particularly, given the fact that she was forced to acclimate to an environment where she was no longer apart of the dominant cultural capital in the class or the school. As Irvine & Irvine (1983) assert, "For black children, desegregated schools and teaching staffs necessarily meant that teacher- pupil interaction relationships changed from an essential two-way interaction, i.e., pupil ability and class, toward a three-way inter- play of pupil ability-social class-race interaction"(p. 413). Mrs. Evans did not report overt, or covert for that matter, instances of racism experienced. However, research clearly indicates racist practices in schools to often seem invisible (Berlak, 2001).

To conclude, four protective processes seem key in helping to develop Mrs. Evans's positive adaptive response to desegregating schools. One, Mrs. Evans' attests that her mother had the same high regard for education as her father instilled in her as a young child. This is evidenced by not only Mrs. Evans' parents teaching her at home, but an additional indicator is Mrs. Evan's mother's response to her second grade teacher making her eat milk drenched spinach. Indeed, Walker (2000; 1996) found that many African American parents from 1930-1960's were found to believe parental support in schooling was demonstrated by enforcing respect for teachers. Second, Mrs. Evans' mother high regard for education likely developed as a protective process for her since education in the African American community is well documented as being significant

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(Walker, 2000; Portes & Wilson, 1976; Cookson & Persell, 1991; Perry&, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003.).

In addition, I also interpret as a protective factor Mrs. Evans' elementary school teachers who she deemed 'did not play,' and the one African American teacher she identified during her 7th and 8th grade years of school as positive. It is significant to note that Mrs. Evans positive school experiences during her years in a desegregated school system are not uncommon. Walker (2000; 1996) argues that exemplary teachers were a common characteristic of segregated schools and that students who attended segregated schools often recall teachers who held high expectations, demanding teaching styles, intermingled with dedication and devotion to ensure students learned. Interestingly, Mrs. Evans mentions on several occasions that she loved school- that she'd always loved school. In my conversations with her, she made a connection between her love of school and being shy and being around children. In a follow-up interview Mrs. Evans confirmed a direct connection between her teachers as encouraging, motivating and preparing her well and her positive experiences with school. She expressed that she believed her elementary schooling prepared her better for college than did her middle and high school years.

Third, Mrs. Evans financial windfall in middle school helped to ease financial strain on her family. Thus I argue that a combination of being placed in academically gifted track in elementary school and supportive influences of schooling at home may have served as protective processes that helped to evolve Mrs. Evans resilience essentially contributing the development of her self-esteem and self-efficacy. These

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protective processes may have allowed her to adapt well to transitioning to an environment where she was a part of the non-dominant culture.

Yet, the development of resilience through protective processes did not always seem to come from Mrs. Evans family. Mrs. Evans reported she entertained the idea of majoring in math when she initially attended college, but was discouraged by her mother. As she noted, "'Cause way back then that's what Black folks did. You became teachers, preachers one or the other." Mrs. Evans held fast to her mother's advice despite the fact that she was encouraged by professors to major in the subject that she professed to love. But her respect for her mother's decision would not allow her to:

> *And I really wanted to major in math because I loooved math from my junior high experiences. But my mom said you need to be an elementary teacher. Because I was a girl. And nobody had thought about girls majoring in math. And so, since I was the child who listened what my mom said I went in to elementary education. And loved every bit of it. But I tell people if I had a chance to do it again I would've majored in math.*

Such a limited parental expectation did not seem to have a negatively impacted on Mrs. Evans' perception of her ability to be successful. Instead, she stated that both her mother's expectations, as knowing what was best for her daughter, along with God's will, proved to be the major factor in why being discouraged to major in math did not impact her life negatively.

> *See I just wonder . . . I wonder how my li . . . but you know what? I think about it and I don't think about it because I realize that my life, the plan for my life was decided by God. And this is the track He wanted me to take. Because otherwise it would have changed at some point. And it never did. Even with those professors coming to me make me change my major from elementary education to science or math I still didn't do it. Ummmm . . . so I feel like I went on the right track. I really do*

At the time Mrs. Evans entered college in 1975 parts of Title IX had been clarified including making clear to schools "school systems may take remedial and affirmative

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steps to increase the participation of students in programs or activities where bias has occurred" (Valentin, 1997). Changes in the enactment of policy, as it related to gender, may have had an influence on the professors taking initiative to seek Mrs. Evans' out in obtaining a degree in the science or math field. A field that to this day is bereft of diversity (Blickenstaff, 2005).

This decision can be viewed in at least two ways. On one hand, Mrs. Evans may have increased her developmental process of resilience by increasing her self-esteem in regards to the professors insisting she change majors (a fact she seems very proud of in her narrative). -a possible carry over from a developed confidence in math from her previous experiences. Or, she could have been discouraged that women and African Americans at that time were boxed into occupations of preachers and teachers. Regardless, the latter did not have this effect on her.

Resilience in context of racism and schooling processes. Dr. Jeffrey's narrative extends the notion of development protective processes in response to resilience in a changing context of racism and schooling processes. Here I also make use of historic demographic data. First, Dr. Jeffrey also attested to protective processes by parents. Differing from Mrs. Evans, Dr. Jeffrey reported that his mother never mentioned college as an option, but she, along with his grandmother, encouraged him to obtain his high school diploma. Dr. Jeffrey stated, "To them an 'education' was a high school diploma." Because of his good grades in school, Dr. Jeffrey reported that his grandmother proclaimed he would be a preacher. He recalled, "Ah see my grandmother's idea of success was a minister. My grandma wanted me to be a minister. Ah, Lord, he's gonna

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be a preacher." Dr. Jeffrey stated that he had no intentions of becoming a preacher or going to college at all.

First, in attending to context, I note that Dr. Jeffrey did not experience desegregation in his grade school, middle, or high school years. However, much like Mrs. Evans, he did experience educational tracking. Dr. Jeffrey reported that his way out of tracking involved maneuvering around the school scheduling that took place during the summer:

> *Well they would do a pre-registration thing in the summer months or before we got there. But we had to at least go to class to turn the little card in then they put you on the roll. But there were kids who . . . we could steal the little cards and just write them out ourselves. And if we were in there for about thirty days before they realized we were supposed to be somewhere else.*

Dr. Jeffrey would perform this action until he graduated high school in 1966.

Tracking occurs when schools systematically place students in an educational track they may or may not be rigorous (Oakes, 1985). Traditionally, once students are placed in a certain educational track they remain there until they graduate from high school. For children who are already learning from a teacher in a track that pushes them academically, this can be positive. However, for students in a lower academic track the end oftentimes results in a culmination of skills that do not equip the student to succeed in college—an adversity that could have very well halted him from obtaining a college degree. Dr. Jeffrey recalled in high school always being placed in the low track. Within Dr. Jeffrey's narrative he revealed that, "somehow I got dumped in with the thugs because I guess you know I came from the wrong side of town." In this biology class, Dr. Jeffrey desired to learn but felt that the teacher spent more time disciplining than he did teaching. Upon becoming fed up one day with not learning Dr. Jeffrey decided that

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he would leave the class in search of a better biology teacher. Dr. Jeffrey then touted his

ability to obtain another class registration card in order to be taught by the biology

teacher who he deemed had the 'brighter students'.

Protective processes of self-esteem and teachers not turning him in seemed to

support Dr. Jeffrey's resilience in this instance. Furthermore, Dr. Jeffrey also exhibited

the awareness of the fact that there was a different track for certain students. Dr. Jeffrey

recollected that:

> *you had a college prep curriculum and you had something I guess a technical*
> *curriculum, which was like for trade schools. And, and, and ahh the college prep*
> *you get the French and the foreign languages and so forth to prepare you to go to*
> *college. You know and take the SAT and all that kind of stuff.*

Dr. Jeffrey did not recall when he became aware that one track led to college and the

other did not. However, Anderson (1988) documents that since the 1880s, the leaders in

the African American community were well aware of the culture of power (Delpit,1988)

in schooling processes. But, in fact:

> Black leaders did not view their adoption of the classical liberal curriculum or its
> philosophical foundations as mere imitation of white schooling. Indeed, they
> knew many whites who had no education at all. Rather, they saw this curriculum
> as providing access to the best intellectual traditions of their era and the best
> means to understanding their own historical development and sociological
> uniqueness. (Anderson, 1988, p. 29)

That he and other students identified teachers who 'taught' and who did not contribute to

his process of recognizing that he would need to 'steal' new registration cards in order to

learn or perhaps even to move forward. These notions are paralleled with the fact that the

teachers in the new class in which he self-enrolled never 'threw' him out of the class. Or

never sought to make him return to the class he was originally enrolled. Dr. Jeffrey

stated that after about a month or so the teacher would receive the 'correct' roll and

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would let him remain in class because he/she was aware that he could handle the course load.

Mr. Smith also shared that his parents (his mom with an 8th grade and his dad with a 7th grade education) never mentioned college as an option.

> *Starting out my parents never mentioned college. But they mentioned we were going to school. We were gonna finish school. That was one of the things they said, so it wasn't a thing of mentioning college, because of the fact that they was not astute to what college was all about. Because they didn't even finish high school. But they knew education was very important.*

Despite Mr. Smith's claims that his parents had a limited education, he reported parent involvement in his schooling.

> *And, especially my mom. She would call the school because the fact that she couldn't come to the school because she had to work. But she would call the school to ask questions about it. And they would end up puttin' me where I needed to be.*

Mr. Smith confirmed his parents' value of education even more by conveying a sense of pride that he and his siblings all had perfect attendance.

Mr. Seas also reported that his mother supported him and his siblings throughout school, noting that his mother *"stayed on us about getting that diploma."* However, in attending to context, I think it is also important to note that Mr. Smith and Mr. Seas attended grade school in the South at a time when desegregation had long been enacted in most public school systems—a vastly different context from Mrs. Evans and Dr. Jeffrey. Mr. Smith and Mr. Seas also both graduated high school in the 1980's and both stated that most of their teachers were White. Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith also share similarities in that they were both student athletes. Importantly, Mr. Smith's family make-up differed from all participants in that he was raised in a two parent home his entire life. In fact,

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Mr. Smith is the only participant to mention having an abundance of food and clothes and the only participant to have been raised with farm responsibilities:

> *I got home, I'm tired from football practice. You know mama done cooked, all that nice fried chicken, biscuits. Back then we had all that, my mom you know, we didn't go lacking with clothing. We didn't go lacking with things like food. All that was taken care of. But things like hogs and all that, you raise your own. You, you, you did everything on your own. You had all that stuff back then. But we used to raise it.*

Keeping in mind that Dr. Jeffrey graduated high school in the late 1960s and Mrs. Evans in the mid-1970s, Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith also both report an awareness of educational tracking. When asked about the type of courses he witnessed students taking, Mr. Seas revealed that he felt as if his lack of motivation kept him from taking the college track classes. But his 11th and 12th grade year he decided to inquire about college. Mr. Seas also acknowledged that observing other friends apply for colleges prompted him to seek out information about college. He recalled, "Yeah other students. And we talked. You know how students talk. And you pick up some things there. With my situation I had to run into it, because my parents was not knowledgeable about it."

Mr. Sea's narrative diverges from the other participants as he does not directly claim to have experienced tracking. Instead it seems his interpretation of being placed in classes that lacked rigor was a result of his lack of motivation. Mr. Seas even sees a correlation between his identity as an athlete and his lack of effort to do better in school. Mr. Smith, along with the other three African American participants' attested to an awareness of students receiving access to a different style of curriculum. A difference in curriculum that Mr. Smith began to pay attention to and kept up with what he refers to as a 'certain group' of students:

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You know I used to try and model and stay with the group, I would call them the A group. The ones that always stayed on the narrow where their parents came to the school and check on'em. Their parents came to the teachers and that kind of stuff. So I stayed with sort of that group. And like I said I knew where I wanted to go. By the end of my tenth grade year I knew that I wanted to move forward to a college. High school teachers. They just didn't give me knowledge. And but one thing I did know and I sort of watched over the years you know there was always a certain pool of students that they put in situations to be successful. Others they didn't . . . And that's something that still happening today. You know you got educators that put certain people in the position to be successful. And you have others that you just out, just to move through.

Mr. Smith also shared that within his schooling experiences, he came away with the

impression that some teachers did not care about their students:

. . . but I thought it was just at face value because of the fact that you know they would laugh and smile and say things to you and real nice to you then, but that's what the job called for I thought. Because of the fact that I didn't really think that they was in the best interest of wanting you to move forward in life or this or that . . . I just didn't feel that way.

When asked if most of his teachers were White, Mr. Smith answered "yes" and then

shared one instance he remembered where a teacher's rude remarks conveyed to Mr.

Smith that certain teachers did not encourage students:

But he was a teacher coach. He said something one day, negative to a guy. He told him that he'd never be . . . he'll never amount to anything. I was listening and I took that as a that's the way he thought about all the young men that was out there. Because if he thought that way about him and he said it out loud . . . you know . . . , how did he feel about me?

Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith both reported growing up in rural areas. They are

roughly the same age, with Mr. Seas graduating in 1985 and Mr. Smith 1982. It is

obvious by the time period that they both attended integrated schools. But amongst all

their similarities in schooling experiences they have differing perspectives. In keeping

with an awareness of the impact of a changing context, I assert that the few years

between Mr. Smith and Mr. Seas did make a difference in terms of educational reform

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and policy. In 1981, Mr. Smith's senior year of high school, the National Commission on Education was created to investigate the quality of education in the United States (Gardner, 1983). The report issued vast observations of underachievement in American schools. Chief among its findings:

> of high school diploma requirements reveals that only eight States require high schools to offer foreign language instruction, but none requires students to take the courses. Thirty-five States require only 1 year of mathematics, and 36 require only 1 year of science for a diploma" (National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983, p. 121)

In light of this report, it is quite possible that Mr. Smith underwent a more 'cafeteria style curriculum', wherein high school students were seen to be taking more extracurricular courses as opposed to a college type curriculum (Gardner, 1983). When asked how well he thought his high school prepared him to succeed academically in college Mr. Smith's reported, 'They just didn't give me knowledge." In addition he felt the teachers were polite, but that he did not get a genuine sense of caring. Mr. Smith's perception of schooling is similar to what Kirk and Goon (1975) described as teachers who believed in the educability of students actually taught, as opposed to those who had low expectations and seemed to instead 'babysit' students.

In contrast, Mr. Seas reported that he thought he could have done more as a student and so could his teachers. Mr. Seas interpreted his passive attitude toward school initially as a result of being an athlete. But that his father's passing caused him to pay more attention to students who seemed to be on a college track. Furthermore, Mr. Seas was impacted by the national educational report A *Nation at Risk* which resulted in increased academic requirements for high school graduation. Mr. Seas did not report any

recognition of privileges he may have received related to these changes in policies on education.

In conclusion, I consider how the participants' resiliency developed within a changing context and the second theme of life course paradigm, the timing of lives. [28] Ungar (2012) duly notes that, "it can be difficult to predict the influence of an opportunity without understanding both the context in which it becomes available, as well as the strengths and challenges of those who access it" (Ungar, 2012, p. 21). It is important to understand that the way in which the participants responded to certain opportunities had the potential and eventually contributed to changing the trajectory of their lives. Rutter (1987) and Schilling (2008) assert that it is important to introduce and examine protective mechanisms at key turning points. Moreover, Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) and Rutter (1987) affirm that "It seems helpful to use the term "protective mechanism" when what was previously a risk trajectory is changed to one with a greater likelihood of an adaptive outcome" (p. 318).

First, I consider Dr. Jeffrey and the way in which he was presented with an 'opportunity' to steal or accept class registration cards. This opportunity became available at a time when Dr. Jeffrey had years building his self-efficacy in his ability to handle above average classes. He also had a support system at home; teachers he eventually came into contact with who also believed in his intelligence and, as will be mentioned later in question two, a support system within his community. I am assuming that many students in his school knew about the ongoing system of being able to change one's registration cards. Since Dr. Jeffrey did not mention that the card stealing was not

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[28] In question two I will address how certain people intersected with changing context, and the timing of the participants lives to act as a protective process.

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exposed as a 'scandal,' I also assume that some students may not have wanted to break the rules, while others may not have felt comfortable putting themselves in classes they may have felt were out of the realm of their academic capability. Thus, I suggest that Dr. Jeffrey response to being placed into classes with "thugs" did not deter him from taking advantage of this 'opportunity' or to adapt positively (Ali & Jenkins, 2002; D'Souza, 2009). While we may question what prompted Dr. Jeffrey to believe and therefor act on changing his high school curriculum, there is no doubt that having access to a college prep curriculum helped in preparing him for his college career, thereby changing the trajectory of his life.

Indeed, in sharing their stories, the participants made connections between their own ability to exercise agency in their educational career, their parents influence on their education in general and their willingness, or not, to recognize the way in which socio-historical context interacted with their narratives. All participants in this study offered unique and personal educational journeys informed by their experiences and perspectives.

Each of the participants educational stories demonstrate developmental processes that made them increasingly more skilled at adapting positively to adverse situations. Yet, it is important to note that all of their situations differ. For example, Mrs. Evans underwent desegregation; theoretically speaking, desegregation was implemented as a means to redistribute opportunity and resources for children of color (Coleman, 1966). However, in practice, the enactment of desegregation policies provided experiences where many children of color felt culturally excluded or unaware of the ways in which dominant culture worked in schools (Kirk & Goon, 1975), as was the case for Mrs. Evans.

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Dr. Jeffrey did not undergo desegregation in his schooling. He experienced a one room school and teachers who constantly placed him in low track classes. All markers of what African American children are said to have experienced in their segregated schools (Walker, 2000). However, in the same vein as Walker (2000), I argue against a grand narrative that portrays segregated schools for African American children filled with cultural deficits (Brantlinger, 2003; Gorski, 2006; Kirk & Goon, 1975). On the contrary, Mrs. Evans reported having teachers who were warm demanders (Delpit, 2012) demonstrating high expectations and notions of care. Dr. Jeffrey reported accessing a college prep curriculum. Both instances demonstrate teachers who cared and taught, and moreover can be seen as indicative of segregated African American schools acknowledgement of the need for implementing a college prep curriculum. Rigorous curricula were not uncommon for segregated African American schools (Anderson, 1988). In Walker's (2000) survey of segregated African American schools she found:

> Schools surveyed sought whenever possible to be certain that the same curriculum was being offered to African American boys and girls as was being offered at White schools. Although they note the second-hand books they were given by the school boards, the schools followed the standard curriculum prescribed by the state in which the school was located (Edwards et al., 1979), including offering Latin and other academically accelerated courses. (p. 267)

Furthermore, it is clear that instances of Dr. Jeffrey 'stealing' class registration cards to have a chance at a rigorous curriculum demonstrated his belief in education. It also seemed to illustrate that he encountered a sort of institutional support from teachers who turned a blind eye to how he 'registered' for their classes (Walker, 2000). Much of the participants' educational journeys revealed their challenges and how they felt they were either able to turn their challenge or adversity into a positive or how they now see the adversity they faced as having a positive impact on their life now. Obtaining and

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listening to the participants own stories gives credence to the notion of keeping context. As Jarrett (1998) emphasized the importance of studying children ''in their own right, moving beyond constricting normative models'' (p. 13).

In examining the participants' narratives, their ability to respond resiliently to adversity is apparently clear. Dr. Jeffrey attested to having the drive to persevere despite a father who abandoned his family. Additionally, Dr. Jeffrey, Mr. Seas and Mrs. Evans illustrated resilient responses to adversity in their reports of being motivated to have a better life upon seeing their mother's struggle.   Their narratives also revealed experiences as early as grade school where they reported opportunities that led them to evolve in their sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Dr. Jeffrey, Mr. Seas and Smith all reported experiences of self-efficacy and esteem by way of fulfilling certain responsibilities. Dr. Jeffrey gave his mother money; Mr. Seas stated that he learned how to fix broken water pipes in order to help his mother avoid the extra costs of a plumber and Mr. Smith successfully fed his family's hogs seven days a week. All of the aforementioned experiences seemed to serve to foster the participant's ability to respond resiliently to adversity. I posit then that the participant's developed resilience over time. Lastly, the participants' responses revealed how institutional factors can impact whether or not one's response to adversity will result in a positive psychological well-being or maladaptive behavior (Rutter, 2012; Rutter, 1987). From a social ecological frame it is quite apparent that Dr. Jeffrey's entire grade school experiences with segregation and Mrs. Evans' grade school experiences with segregation and desegregation influenced not only the type of schools they were able to attend but also and the psychological effect having to do so.

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Consequently, context (i.e. socio-historical, cultural, political, and economic factors) influences how one will respond to adversity (Rutter, 2012). Examining the participants' stories in this way allowed for a better understanding of the ways in which their resilience developed. Moreover, it also supports the notion that resilience is a response to adversity, not a comprehensive explanation of how one is able to overcome a challenge (Condly, 2006). In the next section I seek to further explore how the participants were able to develop resilient responses over time. Thus I consider factors centered around *natural mentors* as contributing to protective processes that influenced the participants' narratives.

Research Question 2: What are the factors or influences to which they attribute significance in telling their story of their journey out of poverty?

In my response to the second question, I pay particular attention to the factors that the participants offered as significant in ending generational poverty. This discussion is centered on the role of *natural mentors*, in addition to places and events that the participants highlighted in sharing their journey out of poverty. My analysis of research question two draws on the theoretical concept of social capital. The literature asserts that social networks that serve as protective agents (e.g., family members or community networks) or institutional agents (e.g. teachers, counselors, coaches) promote positive adaptations to adversity. (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). I employ a social capital lens to demonstrate how the participants were able to utilize social networks as sources of support and information. I offer examples of specific people in the participants' lives who held high expectations for them, looked out for them, and insisted and encouraged the participants to move forward. I also offer an analysis of the impact of racial solidarity, pre- and post -desegregation, of some of the participants' social capital.

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Natural mentors as protective agents. I begin by addressing important aspects of the participants' educational journeys paying particular attention to natural mentors (Hurd & Sellers, 2013) as factors which influence their telling. Hurd defines natural mentors as, "caring and supportive adults in adolescents' preexisting social networks, such as extended kin, neighbors, coaches, or community members"(p. 76). Although the participants framed their educational journeys around notions of resilience, they also shared stories about natural mentors who, as a source of social capital, shaped or in some way influenced their journey out of poverty. For the purpose of this discussion, I focus on the participants' perceptions regarding natural mentors as having provided protective processes either by building supportive, positive relationships which served to undergird their positive psychological development, or as an institutional agent providing access to a wealth of pertinent informational resources.

Dr. Jeffrey named two people and Mr. Seas named one person who had a long-standing positive influence over their lives. For Dr. Jeffrey and Mr. Seas, these relationships are significant in that they began early in their lives and lasted until adulthood. In contrast, the other two participants, Mrs. Evans and Mr. Smith, named natural mentors whose relationships demonstrated significance, but were comparatively brief during their education journey.

Dr. Jeffrey's natural mentors. Dr. Jeffrey's educational narrative was unique in that he was the only participant who reported two long-standing relationships with natural mentors. Dr. Jeffrey began recalling his educational journey, starting from kindergarten and halted at sixth grade with no real account of any teacher who influenced him positively or any recollection of a teacher he really liked. Dr. Jeffrey then brought Mr.

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Dean into his narrative. Dr. Jeffrey met Mr. Dean when he was eight or nine years old

through a purely accidental meeting of forbidden football in Mr. Dean's yard. That

encounter produced a relationship that would follow Dr. Jeffrey all of his life.

> *Ahhh . . . no . . . particular teacher, you know during that first couple of years, you know ahh . . . but I knew some other folks who were not . . . who were teachers but at a different level who sort of took an interest in me. Ahh one man in particular was Mr. Thomas Dean. And Ahh . . . he took an interest in me when I was about eight, nine years old. He would always sort of come and find out what my grades were . . . ahh . . . to keep me out of trouble. Because it started . . . was . . . . Somehow he knew my daddy. And . . . he had this pretty lawn and I played with people's kids that lived across the street from him and we would play on the edge of his lawn, with the little kids with the football. And we'd run around and sort of mess it up and he didn't want us to do that. And he would come out and he would catch us, make us sit there. And one day I said I wasn't going to sit there no more. I just took off running. He ran me down. I was eight, nine years old . . . I guess he was in his thirties but he ran me down. So that's when he said, "Well, you don't listen" and ah . . . "What's your name!? And I told him my name and . . . and I told him my name and he says ahhh, your Monte's . . . whose Monte? And I said well that's my daddy. And he says "Well where's he at"? And I said he's gone. He left. He said so . . . so he started telling me that he knew my daddy. And he started telling me stuff that . . . ahh yeah, they'd gone to high school together. And ahhh . . . he just took an interest in me.*

Another accidental encounter produced a relationship with a well-connected

housewife, Mrs. Bethel. Mrs. Bethel and her husband sparked a long time relationship

with Dr. Jeffrey that would provide support in many ways.

> *I met her through just being mischievous. They had these pecan trees in front of the house. And some of them, falling in the street. So one day, I said I'ma pick some of these pecans up. I'm gonna pick them up and put them in my pocket. And ahhh, she came out. And, and she told me, "You're picking up my pecans?" I says, no their not yours. She said "Why?" I said first off they in the street. I said, everything that, there's was a fence, I said everything on that side that's yours. Everything over here, in the street is anybody who wants it. It's the public. And then she asked me how old I was. I was eight, eight years old." How do you know all this?" I said 'cause I know. I know. I never was never bashful. I know. She said "Well, they still mine. They came off my tree." Said, no that's not the way it go ma'am. I was polite 'bout it, you know. Then she decided let's make a deal. You pick them up. And I'll pay you to pick them up if you give them to me. I said that sounds fair enough. So I picked up pecans and she said, "Well, you help me. And I'll help you." So we picked up pecans together and ahh, then she'd always*

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invite me, started inviting me back. "Where do you go to school at?" And I told her. "Well you gone come by and see me." Said I ride the bus, I can't come by and see you. The bus don't come by here [laugh]. She said "Well, I'm gone come check on you. Okay?"

According to Hurd et al (2013) it is not uncommon for Black adolescents to have access to organic or natural mentors. It is also worthy to note the way in which Dr. Jeffrey met his two natural mentors. As indicated by the name natural mentor, it is apparent that Dr. Jeffrey, nor the other participants' were assigned a mentor. Each participant came to meet or know their natural mentors by some arbitrary occurrence. Gladwell (2008) explored the notion of happenstance or "extraordinary opportunities" as a means to providing a path to success. For example, through an examination of the life history of a high-powered attorney he illustrated the influence, benefits, and randomness of relationships or networks in achieving success. Gladwell pointed out that while growing up, social networks or relationships were particularly important for the lawyer given that he grew up poor— the child of Jewish immigrant parents during the Great Depression and consequently with limited networks with people in power. Thus, I seek to examine here Gladwell's assertion that people oftentimes come to success through processes of many serendipitous encounters with others.

In social network analysis[29], scholars seek to understand not only what makes for a productive work relationship, but how certain unpredictable relationships, at unpredictable moments can make for an environment where grand and innovative ideas

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[29] Scholars in the field of computer science utilize social network analysis to determine relationship structure between individuals (Johnson & Faraj, 2005). In the field of computer science understanding how one develops a relationship is important as it can lead to exchange of bold and exciting information and ideas. In short social network analysis pays close attention to social capital within the creation of a collaborative project of some sort. Prusak and Borgatti (2001) find that "social network analysis (SNA) provides a rich and systematic means of assessing informal networks by mapping and analyzing relationships among people, teams, departments or even entire organizations" (p. 103).

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take place. Kilduff, Crossland, & Tsai (2008) argue that creative ideas in some relationships happen as a result of serendipity or serendipitous interactions. Moreover, they argue that one cannot predict how productivity or creative formulations in relationships develop, as some relationships "develop haphazardly based on opportunistic encounters" (p. 10). Johnson et al. (2005) explained that these serendipitous interactions happen due to "deeply subjective aspects of human action," and that they "cannot be accounted for by structure-based mechanisms" (p. 289).

This coincides with literature on natural or informal mentors who appear to choose their mentees based on intelligence, physical attractiveness, and a pleasing personality (Erickson, McDonald & Elder, 2009). I note that Dr. Jeffrey's relationships with his two recognized natural mentors were happenstance. I use the term 'serendipitous interaction' here to illustrate the randomness of the meeting, interaction, and relationship that evolved between the mentor and the mentee. The relationships are random as seen in the description of their initial meeting. But the participants' relationships with natural mentors also convey a sense of randomness and subjectivity in that Mr. Dean would take an interest in Dr. Jeffrey— a child who is not his own, nor related to him in any way. This is significant since Dr. Jeffrey's relationships with Mr. Dean, and Dr. and Mrs. Bethel, will prove to be influential social capital—a type of social capital, which is normally inherited from parents to children or husband to wife (Portes, 1998; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Bourdieu, 1973).

Natural mentors and social capital. The participant's narratives revealed the ways in which natural mentors, as a means of social capital, developed a relationship with the participants, not only as a link to access a social network, but also as resources of

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information and encouragement. Hurd et al (2013) reinforces this notion of natural mentors as supporting the development of positive adaptive traits. She contends that relationships with natural mentors can serve to enhance interpersonal skills and the "ability to connect with others" (p.76). Moreover, Hurd argues that positive outcomes are often seen "between the presence of a natural mentor and high school performance and overall educational attainment" (p. 77) in young adults.

Lareau and Horvat (1992) state "parents' cultural and social resources become forms of capital when they facilitate parents' compliance with dominant standards in school inter-actions" (p. 42). I argue here that in the absence of the participants parents knowledge about schooling processes and resources, the information obtained from the natural mentors served to be '*forms of capital*' to facilitate compliance with dominant standards in school and in society.

In illustrating how social capital developed with Mrs. Bethel, Dr. Jeffrey shared that when Mrs. Bethel would come to pick him up, his friends in his neighborhood would tease him by referring to Mrs. Bethel as his "little White lady" – a reference, Dr. Jeffrey explained, to her fair-skinned complexion. But he affirmed that he did not mind and quickly grew very fond of her because of the 'motherly' attention she seemed to shower on him. "She'd keep me there all summer," he reported, "And she'd always buy me cokes. She'd bring me, we'd drink sodas together and have lunch. And she just, just was nice to me."

Dr. Jeffrey mentioned that Dr. and Mrs. Bethel provided assistance for his family as well. Dr. and Mrs. Bethel would provide economic support by providing work for his mother as a housekeeper, as well as a place for his younger sisters to hang out on

occasion. However, when asked in a follow-up interview whether Dr. or Mrs. Bethel assisted his siblings in the way they assisted him, or if Mrs. Bethel showered attention on his siblings as she did him, Dr. Jeffrey stated "No" and that she mostly elected to spend time with him.

> *Ahh, she used to give me 50 cents an hour to push the lawn mower. Which is a lot of money when you think about it back then you know, just to keep me out of trouble. She would just do stuff, you know and I knew . . .I finally figured out she was just doing stuff to have me there. 'Cause in summers months . . . I would go there every day. And we, the lawn was a big lawn, front and back, and we'd push the lawn mower. And then we'd wash windows, inside and out. And by that time, I'd have to push the lawn mower again. And we wash again. And she'd keep me there all summer. And ahh, it got to the point where if I didn't go, she'd come looking for me.*

Dr. Jeffrey reported that his relationship with Mrs. Bethel grew so close that, at one point in time, she asked his mother if he could come and live with her and Dr. Bethel:

> *You know one time she asked my mama to just let me stay with her for a long time. "You just let him stay with us". And my mom said "No. I can't separate my children." You know, can't separate them. "Whatever I eat, they eat." You know, and ahhh . . . so. That was that.*

When Dr. Jeffrey was between the ages of 10 and 12, Dr. and Mrs. Bethel would adopt two children. He admitted feeling out of place, but not left out:

> *And around that time is when they adopted the first kid. I got mad. 'Cause hey, I was their child, basically. But I still kept going and she got the boys, the first boy. And I would go, 'cause if I didn't she would come looking for me and stuff like that. And actually I kept going until I was in high school and got involved in sports and stuff like that.*

Dr. Jeffrey's reporting of his mother declining to allow him to go and live with Dr. and Mrs. Bethel speaks to two important factors in supporting Dr. Jeffrey's developmental process of resilience. First, his mother's refusal suggests the love and connection she had with her son—a clear protective factor as noted by Sroufe et al. (2009). Second, Werner (1997) confirms that "Despite the burden of chronic poverty, family discord or parental

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psychopathology, children identified as resilient usually had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one competent and stable person who was attuned to their need" (p. 104). Dr. Jeffrey's interpretation of Mrs. Bethel as motherly denotes how significant she was in his life and the close relationship they shared. Stanton-Salazaar (1997) contends that close, nurturing, positive relationships can become, "key precisely because they represent interpersonal ties to people committed to and capable of transmitting vital, diversified resources. These resources range from those necessary for the development of resiliency to those necessary for school success and social mobility" (p. 7).

I posit here Hurd et al (2013) and DuBois and Silverthorn's (2005) assertions that characteristics of genuine care and concern are important components of an effective relationship between natural mentor and mentee. I interpret that Dr. Jeffrey's experience with Mrs. Bethel offering to have him live with her as evidence of their close relationship. DuBois and Silverhorn (2005) argue that strong relationships between mentor and mentee are dependent upon the "mentor's role in the youth's life, frequency of contact between mentor and youth, emotional closeness in the relationship, and relationship duration" (p.70). I suggest then that Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Bethel's apparent closeness was influential in their evolving relationship throughout his life which allowed Mrs. Bethel to be not only a natural mentor but an extension of his social capital.

Dr. Jeffrey shared that his visits would sometimes include going to Columbia, South Carolina, a bigger city than where he resided and Mrs. Bethel's hometown.

> *I don't know if she had sisters or brothers but I knew she had cousins. Adam's and there's . . . Washington's. One of them just died recently. And ahh, Dr. Adam has two children, a daughter and a son, and they were close in age to me. And they were real fair skinned children. Like white children basically.*

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Mrs. Bethel would also take Dr. Jeffrey to visit her cousin, a physician, every Thursday afternoon. Dr. Jeffrey's reference to Mrs. Bethel being a part of the 'Washingtons' and 'Adams' families indicates that she had significant social capital in her ties to a local affluent Black family. Dr. Jeffrey also stated that he had a close relationship with Dr. Bethel, who served as Dean of Agriculture at a nearby historically Black college. Dr. Bethel also had family ties to a lucrative, Charleston construction company and descended from a family of generational college graduates—a feat that was particularly challenging given the time period.

The fact that Mr. Dean was a teacher, Dr. Bethel was a professor, and Dr. and Mrs. Bethel both came from families with apparently high status capital, as indicated by their professions, and the Bethel's connections to a potentially affluent family, proved beneficial to Dr. Jeffrey. I argue that his arbitrarily developed social capital had the same effects of the social capital that one would receive living in a high socio-economic neighborhood. The literature has demonstrated consistently that socio-economic status bears greater on educational attainment than schooling (Coleman et al, 1966; Lareau, 2003; Anyon, 1980; Owens, 2010). Scholars who find significance in the connection between socio-economic status and neighborhood ties argue that, "advantaged neighbors provide social networks or ties that facilitate educational attainment and/or that advantaged neighbors enforce norms, serve as role models, and collectively socialize youths into attitudes that lead to educational attainment" (Owens, 2009, p. 289). Furthermore, Owens contends that one's neighborhood can have an influence on academic tracks, chosen peers and ultimate expectations for themselves.

Natural mentors and protective processes. I now seek to broaden my analysis of natural mentors as serving to bring about protective processes in the participants' lives. I make use of Schilling's (2008) assertion that resilience evolves based on protective processes and not solely individual attributes (i.e. independence, self-efficacy, self-esteem). Furthermore, Condly (2006) also contends that certain variables (i.e. parental involvement, support, and guidance), also foster resilient responses to adversity. Accordingly, I suggest that relationships with certain people, *such as natural mentors and extended family*, served to facilitate protective process in the lives of the participants. The participants' narratives revealed that natural mentors or family members *provided support, encouragement, or in some cases served as sources of the information needed to succeed in school*.

Mr. Seas mentioned that his pastor, a natural mentor, had a significant impact on his life. In a follow-up, interview Mr. Seas explained his relationship with his pastor:

> *When my father passed away the church was there. In fact when my father passed away my preacher and my mom came home to tell us. So he was there, you know from time I was growing up, to the time I got married. He married us. And he still keeps in touch.*

The relationship with his pastor did not fully develop into a natural mentorship until his father passed away:

> *When my father passed away the church was there. My preacher wasn't only just a preacher. He was also a coach of the basketball team. The church basketball team. He was very involved in the athletic part of the church. And ah spiritually he taught me a lot of things. He taught me to control my temper. I think the church at that critical time in my life played a big role.*

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Mr. Seas gave an example of one way his pastor helped him to understand the importance of controlling his temper.

> *I remember playing church basketball as a teenager during . . . and pastor was the coach. . .and I remember getting a temper one time in the game . . . he called me over, he said come sit down right here 'til you cool off . I learned right then that I needed to be careful how I handled myself. But by when playing basketball, my preacher pulled me out and sat me right there and he did not put me back in the rest of the game. And that was a learning point for me. I don't need to take my aggressions out on the game. Right. I tell him every time I see him, I say you know you're the one who taught me how to be patient and not try to be aggressive and with my temper. And by sittin' me out, 'cause I loved the game so much and I think he knew that. And he just said you sit right there the rest of the game. Didn't put me back in. But I didn't act like that again.*

Dr. Jeffrey also reported that Mr. Dean and his fellow fraternity brother, Coach Keller[30], both assisted in modifying his behavior in certain situations as well. According to Dr. Jeffrey, sometimes Mr. Dean would occupy his time if he was suspended from school. Mr. Dean would have him teach his class or tutor students. In addition, Dr. Jeffrey recalled Coach Keller breaking up a fight between Dr. Jeffrey and some other young men in college. Coach Keller warned Dr. Jeffrey that he needed to modify his temper:

> *I'm kicking him, I started kicking him in the head. So then they wanted to fight and we got out, fighting and started fighting. And they didn't know I had a knife in my sock. [laughs] So I pulled out my knife and cut him. And ahh Coach came and grabbed me, said "What the hell are you doing man? I know you and I know what your temper is", 'cause Tommy, that's what they called Mr. Dean, "cause Tommy has told me about you. And I been noticing you for a year" . . . Ahh, coach was always sort of be on my case, you know my temper. You know he was a phys ed teacher and he's always be on me 'cause he say "Your temper is too bad. You can't do things like that, think about what you're doing."*

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[30] Mr. Dean was a childhood friend of Dr. Jeffrey's father and has since passed away. A secondary interview with Mr. Wright, a former employer of Dr. Jeffery's when he was in high school and college, confirmed that he and Mr. Dean worked together to keep an eye on Dr. Jeffrey. Dr. Jeffrey did not state that Coach Keller had as much vested interest in him as Mr. Dean. Instead Coach Keller was more of a secondary natural mentor, similar to Dr. Jeffrey's experiences with Mr. Wright. There is no way to actually verify his motivations to continually check on Dr. Jeffrey's progress throughout his educational journey

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In various and unpredictable ways, Dr. Jeffrey and Mr. Seas' respective natural mentors gave them tools to work around or within the culture of power specific to their social ecology in ways that it buffered adversity and contributed to positive adaptations. Consequently, I argue that just as Dr. Jeffrey's natural mentors arbitrarily exercised their agency in deciding to offer their social, and later cultural capital, Dr. Jeffery, as well as the other participants, exert agency in deciding whether or not to accept it.

Accepting social capital from a natural mentor can be seen as dependent upon the closeness of their relationship to the mentee. Erickson et al. (2009) found that, "Selection processes are substantively important because they lead young people either into or away from such relationships, ultimately influencing their chances for educational success or failure" (p. 348). In this way, it appears that the natural mentor's selection of a mentee is just as subjective as the mentees acceptance of their assistance. In this case, it seems that Dr. Jeffrey's decision to accept the social capital extended to him is based on the fact that Mr. Dean knew his father and that Mrs. Bethel cared a great deal for him.

In conclusion, I argue that Dr. Jeffrey and Mr. Seas' narratives support the existing research on the positive effects of long-standing natural mentors. The length of time they spent with their natural mentors underscores the fact that, as Hurd et al (2013) notes, the length of the relationship how close the participants are with their mentee, and how often they see them may affect how much of an influence the mentor has over the mentee, as well as the degree to which youth are positively affected by mentoring relationships. Hurd et al found that in cases where relationships with natural mentors last at least a year or more, such that they are able to establish strong, binding ties, children who are confronted with many adversities will more than likely heed the advice of their

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mentors. In addition, he argues that through such relationships "youth can learn new strategies to manage conflict, problems, and impulsivity from their older and more experienced adult mentors" (Hurd, 2013, p. 77).

Natural mentors as institutional agents. Stanton-Salazar (1997) argues that, "Institutional agents can be formally defined as those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of, institutional resources and opportunities" (p. 6). Furthermore, he asserts that:

> For children and adolescents, resources can include information about school programs, academic tutoring and mentoring, as well as assistance with career decision-making and college admission. Institutional agents can include middle-class family members, although this term generally draws attention to such people as teachers and counselors, social service workers, clergy, community leaders, college-going youth in the community, and others. Schools peers may also act as institutional agents – for example, when working-class youth obtain informational resources from their middle-class peers. Through relationships with institutional agents, a segment of society gains the resources, privileges, and support necessary to advance and maintain their economic and political position in society" (p. 6)

In each of the participants' narratives, they mentioned a natural mentor who provided information about college or in some way assisted in their transition from high school to college. Natural mentors, as informational resources, seemed crucial in contributing to the participants' resilient responses. With the help of natural mentors, the participants reported receiving information in regards to college preparatory course selection, the college application process, the selection of a major, as well as financial assistance as it pertained to scholarships, grants, and money to take the standardized tests requisite for entry into college. These efforts proved vital in the participants' life trajectories out of generational poverty. I also make the connection here that, for the participants, natural mentors served as social capital or extension of social networks, their natural mentors' educational background and knowledge of schooling processes

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supplemented information that most children from middle class families are easily privy to.

Notably, none of the participants expressed an early desire to enter college. All were guided to seek out college through obtaining a key piece of information, embodied in cultural capital, from their mentors. Apparently, Mr. Smith did not feel as if his high school experience, at least academically, prepared him well for college. He stated, "I personally don't think that they [his high school] gave me all the tools that I needed to go to college." However, after a former athlete, who had graduated and gone on to South Carolina State, informed him about the courses and tests they he would need to take to get into college, he became motivated. Mr. Smith recalled the following:

> *And we had a lot of guys, that with a lot of ability but they were not taking the proper courses. They were not taking the exams, state exams to get in college. And in between . . . like I said him knowing, because he'd been there the trend started with one young man going. During the summer he would come back and work out with us and let us know what was going on there. You know how it was progressing, how was college and it inspired a lot of other students to want to go off to college with the athletic ability. But they wasn't taking the proper courses. So, that's when a lot of students started bombarding guidance counselors office, look what do I need to do to? Where am I now? How can I get there? How can I take these exams? What do I need to prepare myself? We start asking questions that we didn't ask before. Because someone else had educated us about what it took to move forward education wise.*

This random access to information provided by a former high school classmate caused Mr. Smith and others to visit the guidance office to ask questions about college and testing requirements. He stated that it was then that the guidance counselor made him and others aware of other financial supports that might benefit them:

> *I knew nothing about grants and aid to go to college. Knew nothing. Didn't even know anything about going on the internet on research on what it costs to go to this college, or that college, I had no knowledge of it. But eventually, like I said I did find out the knowledge about it because of the fact a guidance counselor named Whilemina Robinson. that came through and started a trend of students*

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going to college. SAT, ACT, application fee. Ahh, we was in a small rural area which you had, most things you had waived. Because of the fact that we didn't know anything about free and reduced lunch. Only thing we got was free. We didn't know that in a small area where they had free and reduced lunch was 99%, 99.9% was where you get a lot of things free in education. Ummm, free way was to take an exam. We had no knowledge of that.

As previously mentioned, Dr. Jeffrey and Mr. Dean's relationship began early in life, and persisted through his high school and college career. Here Dr. Jeffrey recalled how Mr. Dean assisted him getting to college:

I would take the SAT. He sent the application in. For me to take the SAT. Went by my little job he'd gotten for me . . . at the TV repair shop and took my check, I wasn't making but $35 a week. After school I would take my check, 'cause he paid for it. Yes. He paid for my test and he took it. Just took my money. Man you can't do that [he said]. Yes, I can. And I paid for it. He took my money. Well, I said good God, I might as well go and take the darn thing now. Since he's paid for it and wasted my money.

Mr. Dean even obtained the college application for Dr. Jeffrey. Dr. Jeffrey stated, "*Yeah, yeah he went and got it. He made me do it, 'cause I wouldn't do nothing. Just totally not gonna go because other people, 'cause he wanted me to go.*" Moreover, Mr. Dean also guided him in deciding on a major:

'Cause I got there [South Carolina State University] and he says "what you gonna major in?" I said oh history or something. You know . . . He said history . . . right now no jobs in history. What you gone do, go to law school? Said no. I said "law school?![laughter] You're out of your mind". So then he said "you need to find another . . . " I said "what about social science?" He said "no that's history as far as I'm concerned". So I ended up in biology.

Dr. Jeffrey admitted he had no plans or goals attached to his biology major. Dr. Jeffrey explained that he didn't really know why he chose biology. "'*I don't know. Just something to keep his [Mr. Deans] mouth closed*,' he recalled. Even more intriguing than the fact that Dr. Jeffrey had no intention of going to college, nor having any particular major in mind, was his choice of college.

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I had a full scholarship to South Carolina State through Dr. Bethel. But I wouldn't go 'cause my girlfriend didn't go. I had a full scholarship. Or I had to either major in Ag or ROTC, whatever, military science. One or the other. But I was gonna have to have military science anyway, because everybody had to do military science the first two years, all the males at that point and time. So anyway, my girlfriend didn't go or couldn't go because she made about 700 on the SAT, so I was going where she was going. I was in love. I was in love. Shoot she didn't go, so we both ended up at Claflin.

Mrs. Evans also reported receiving pertinent information about college from a guidance

counselor.

I loved my guidance counselor. She just knew I could do well and she was the person who set out to get me various scholarships. I'll never forget her coming to me saying I want you to apply for this. I want you to apply for this. Kaye, go to Mr.Davis. He's a English teacher—make sure he helps you with your letters that you write. She made sure that I ended up with some scholarships because she knew my family would have been able to afford to send me off to college.

Mr. Seas recalled a professor in college who was able to get him scheduled for

independent study courses because of his responsibilities:

Yes, ahhh a professor. His name was Dr. Owens. J. Owens. At USC Aiken. He was my advisor at USC Aiken, and ahhh he was a philosopher. You know how philosopher's talk to people? With a question. So, when you try to talk with him, it was like you ask a question, he asked a question back. So he made you think. So, I ahhh, appreciate him and making me think about some things. But he help me get through USC Aiken. Ahhh, I remember. Some things, I was working, and had a family, and I needed some courses to be independent study courses. Not something I had to go to the university to take. So he worked it out where I would take independent study. On my own time. Long as I completed it by the end of the semester. So he helped me. Get those electives I needed for the degree through and you know being able to take it on my own time. Not go to the classes. Independent study.

Portes (1998) asserts:

Hence, through social capital, actors can gain direct access to economic resources (subsidized loans, investment tips, protected markets); they can increase their cultural capital through contacts with experts or individuals of refinement (i.e. embodied cultural capital); or, alternatively, they can affiliate with institutions that confer valued credentials (i.e. institutionalized cultural capital)."(p. 4)

Supporting Portes' assertion above, Erickson et al (2009) contend that mentors have shown to have a strong impact on high school performance and overall educational attainment. As evident by the participants' accounts, they received all types of relevant and useful information needed to get to college. Consequently, all of the participants were able to enhance their knowledge about the schooling process (i.e. how to apply and get into college) through their access to cultural capital. Mrs. Evans gained information from a guidance counselor about scholarships and Mr. Smith gained information about funding for academic testing. Through Mr. Dean, Dr. Jeffrey acquired information that kept him out of the draft. Mr. Dean also advised him in regards to a major that he deemed potentially profitable for him as a career. Thus, I argue here that natural mentors were a form of social capital to the participants. As part of the participants' social networks, natural mentors offered guidance and useful information which I interpret as an extension of their forms of capital, or cultural and social resources (Lareau & Horvat, 1992).

Furthermore, evidence of natural mentors as a means of extending social and cultural resources is also present in Mrs. Evans' narrative. She stated that her guidance counselor advised her to seek out the English teacher to make sure her essays were up to par. Mr. Dean used money that Dr. Jeffrey earned from working at a job to sign him up to take the SAT, one of the two tests vital to college admission. Mr. Smith stated that he was inspired to go to college after an encountered with a peer who had already gone off to college. According to Bourdieu (1973) the natural mentors' provision of information about college demonstrates the transmission of "laws of the educational market" (p.58). Ovink and Veazey (2011) assert the natural mentors' actions also mirror middle class

parents "knowing how to deploy status to one's advantage" (p. 374). Thus, I find the natural mentors' actions significant and beneficial particularly since the participants' narratives indicate that they did not gain the information needed to apply to college through more traditional channels, such as guidance counselors, teachers, and parents.

In their studies of high-achieving, low-income students, Hoxby and Avery (2012) argued that "many low-income, high-achieving students apply to colleges in a manner that may not be in their best interests and certainly differs from the manner in which similarly high-achieving, high-income students apply" (p.2). They found that this is particularly puzzling given the fact that there is so much financial assistance available to them. Consequently, Hoxby and Avery (2012) assert that if selective colleges want to identify more qualified, high-achieving, low-income students then they should make use of social capital by way of alumni near or in their community.

Community supports. Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2000) offer that early sources of support and experiences of self-efficacy help to develop positive psychological adaptations to adversity. Furthermore, they argue that such experiences lay "the groundwork for later network dispositions, relational patterns, social competencies, and experiences" (p. 245). Consequently, Stanton-Salazar et al. (2000) found that supportive relationships with community and family members are crucial in developing positive psychological adaptations. Protective agents best define these types of relationships. Mr. Smith's description of a local community store owner as supporting and encouraging him while he was in high school is demonstrative of his experiences with protective agents:

> *Ahh had one guy, one guy, Mr. Banks he ran a clothing store and uhh . . . when you say instrumental in my life one thing about it as I got older in high school my junior, senior year he ran a clothing store and I knew why he always gave me things. I would always, he would always come out on Friday nights after games*

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and say "Hey, George, don't forget to come by the store tomorrow." I would go by the store and he would give me like . . . he might give me a pair of pants and a shirt, because of the fact that back then they would give you things because you was performing. You was making the town look good, you were making the team look good, you were making them look good. And they had a boosters club that was a big booster and he was on the booster club and so you know he would give us things. You know he would give us things and this that and the other. And later on in life what I did was, I went back give him things. Ahh, and he was just one, he was just one of the guys that used to give us different things from his store.

Mr. Smith also reported that his church served as a place where he received jobs as an adolescent, and attended classes that assisted children with reading and writing. I interpret his experiences here as exemplary of a protective agent:

Ahhh, one thing that really helped in the community was the ahh church. You know we went to the church, church helped us with Bible school. Helped us learn how to read a little more. Ahh, the church helped us with etiquettes. Several things that the church was really deeply, rooted involved in, in my hometown. Ahh that really helped students because of the fact that the parents didn't have the knowledge of knowing how. And, that's where a lot of things happened.

When asked about the educational backgrounds of the members in his childhood church Mr. Smith reported:

In the church you had people all, you had teachers . . . ahh in my church I had principal, ahh principal at one of the schools. . .he was from the hometown also and those were the type people that was the driving force to get a lot of the students going forward.

Dr. Jeffrey shared that family members were also instrumental in supporting him in his life from a young age. Dr. Jeffrey revealed that he stayed with a relative who had moved up North and allowed him to come and work during the summers. After one particular summer, Dr. Jeffrey stated that he had considered leaving college. According to Dr. Jeffrey he was making 'good money' at a telephone company and contemplated the need for a college degree. However, Dr. Jeffrey took the warning/advice of his cousin not to quit college.

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Dr. Jeffrey reported that he had always been given supported by certain family members. He mentioned two cousins in particular.

And they always encouraged me to go to school. 'Cause my cousins always encouraged me to go to school. 'Cause I was that bright little kid in the family. You know, who always did well. And ahh, so they would always encourage me to go.

In one instance Dr. Jeffrey recalled that one of his cousins, who was in the military, warned him not to leave high school.

 . . . Johnny went to the military also but later on after he left high school. And ahhh Johnny, I started 9ᵗʰ grade and Johnny was just out of high school and he got drafted . . . .: Yeah. He would write me every day. I got letters every day from Johnny. "Don't come in this army. Don't come in this army. Don't come in this army." This is not a good place to be. I hate it, I hate it. If I knew they wouldn't come get me, I'd come home. Don't please stay in school.

I argue that both family and natural mentors served as protective agents throughout Dr. Jeffrey's life. Furthermore, that their guidance and support facilitated protective processes Rutter (1993) that contributed to his ability to adapt positively or respond with resilience. This is important as Stanton-Salazar (1997) assert that

Mobility-related resources are best embodied (though not always) in middle-class social capital, that is, in relationships with high-status institutional agents, while the resources associated with healthy human development are best embodied in relations with protective agents, located principally in family-and community-based networks (e.g., parents, grandparents, and other relatives, caring neighbors, prosocial peers .(p. 7)

The findings in this study differ from Portes' claim (1998) that "acquisition of social capital requires deliberate investment of both economic and cultural resources"(p. 4) The participants' natural mentors and protective agents invested nothing to initiate the relationship. The natural mentors took a liking or had some type of fondness for them that prompted them to try to assist the participants'.

The intersection of key factors. Lastly, I address in question two how the participant's educational narratives illustrate how certain social capital (i.e. natural mentors, institutional and protective agents), intersected with the developmental processes of resilience, as well as a changing context *and* the second theme of life course paradigm, the timing of lives. Here, I highlight as key turning points as they deal directly with shaping the participants' lives right out of college. Furthermore, I suggest that these key turning points demonstrate how this intricate paradigm was used as a stepping stone or protective mechanism to jumpstart the career they currently practice.

The key turning point that Dr. Jeffrey's perceived as having a significant impact on his life's trajectory involved policies that intersected with social and cultural capital. During the time period of the Vietnam war, Dr. Jeffrey was advised by his natural mentor Mr. Dean to go to college and Mr. Dean told him what he should major in:

> *'Cause he followed me all through college. Drove me crazy. What you gone major in. First I wasn't going to go to school. You got to go to school. Ahhh, I said . . . what do you want to do? Pick up a trade, trade school. And ah he said no. That keep you out of the military. The war is going on and you're going to get drafted.*

As mentioned earlier, Mr. Dean would proceed to sign Dr. Jeffrey up for the SAT. Dr. Jeffrey also stated that he chose his biology major to appease Mr. Dean and that he stayed in college in order to avoid being drafted by maintaining a C+ average or better. The possibility that he might be drafted for a war in Vietnam intersected with having Mr. Dean as a natural mentor. Mr. Dean's knowledge of lucrative majors, as well as how to avoid being drafted for the war seemed to support Dr. Jeffrey's decision to attend and stay in college, thus changing his trajectory and leading to Dr. Jeffrey completing his college degree. It is also noted that Dr. Jeffrey had been warned by a cousin in high school about military life. The letters he had received from this natural mentor, who had

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proven trustworthy, warned Dr. Jeffrey not to go into the military. This advice may have also contributed to Dr. Jeffrey's developmental process in responding with resilient behavior in becoming the first college graduate in his family.

As far as I can tell, Dr. Jeffrey's recollection of Mr. Dean telling him that he would not let what happened to his father happen to him serves as the only evidence for his motivation to become his mentor. Furthermore, it is quite reasonable to assume that Dr. Jeffrey could have refused Mr. Deans insistence on helping him. However, Dr. Jeffrey's willingness to work with Mr. Dean (and others) to help him end generational poverty (an adversity) seems to have been buffered by his longitudinal experiences with natural mentors.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Jeffrey seemed to experience two other key protective processes that intersected with the timing of events in his life. These two instances led to his final career. In one instance, he was fresh out of college and had gone to work at a chemical plant. However, he decided to leave and apply to graduate school based on the advice of a relative who worked at the plant:

> *December I got a job at Ethel Refining. We called it a chemical plant in Orangeburg. I got a job out there. Wages were $2.10 an hour, minimum wage. [laugher] Took home, after taxes $64 a week. I can remember that to this day. I made $82 and took home $64. And I did this for a few months. And I had another cousin, my mama's first cousin he had been over there. His daddy had worked at the company. And all the folks would die because the chemicals, you know? And he told me say, "why are you here? Man, you've got a degree." I said well they say I'm go work in the lab. He said "Well, how many White boys from Clemson or USC came here and are in that lab up there now, they did what you're doing?" I said, well they want me to learn the product first and then I can go to the lab. He said, "You never going to the lab man. Your best bet is to get the hell out of here if you ever get a chance". So I then started looking at teacher training programs.*

Dr. Jeffrey explained that his decision to attend a certain Masters level teacher training program was based on the length of the program:

I had all these offers and Richmond came in, whatever . . . in Richmond they had a program and that's close to home too. And, but they were all 24 months for Masters. And ummm . . . so Howard came up and they had a 14 months program. I said well hell I'm going there.

Dr. Jeffrey's combined knowledge of what the chemical plant had done to other's health in the past, added to the fact that he took advice from someone he trusted and that he'd already experienced success with schooling and would receive support from his natural mentors may have bolstered Dr. Jeffrey's confidence in obtaining his Master's degree. I also find, in relation to changing context, that Dr. Jeffrey reached his final career through social capital and timing. Dr. Jeffrey completed his Master's degree in biology education. He was teaching at urban school in Washington, D.C. where he'd attended graduate school. Tired of teaching middle school science, Dr. Jeffrey's decision to enter dental school was based on two primary factors. One included his conversation with his advisor:

And I decided that this is not for me. So, I went and applied for dental school. Well my advisor from the Master's program I told her what I . . . .I told her I don't want to do this anymore. She said "Well, there's med school, dental school open for . . . so why don't you go ahead and apply? I'll write a recommendation." But ah, so she said "It's not a problem, I'll write a recommendation, and I know Joe Henry who is the Dean of Dental school, "if I say you're good, you're good." And ahh she wrote a recommendation. So, I went and applied and they accepted me, but when I got there, the day I got there they found out I didn't have organic chemistry. I'd never taken organic chemistry. So they told me I needed to get the organic chem. And then they would hold a place in the class for me for next year. So I went back to teach for that final year but I took the organic chem, ahhhh the whole year. And it was DC tea. . .no not DC teach . . . ahhh Federal City college which is now University of the District of Columbia which is DC and I took that class four nights a week from 6 to 10.

Dr. Jeffrey explained the difficulty of teaching all day and taking organic chemistry at night intrigued him. His explanation seemed to convey that he loved the challenge.

It was just different, I, I, I think I had a habit of beating myself up. If it wasn't difficult I didn't want to be bothered with it. It was too easy, no its easy I don't want to be bothered with that. And that's what I did.

Another factor that seemed to be highly significant is the shortage area program seeking dental students at this time in Dr. Jeffrey's life (Appendix E). In addition to encouragement he received from other dentist he happened to know. He stated, "I knew, somehow I'd bumped into a few people who were dentist, who worked at the dental school and he encouraged me to go. This guy and he encouraged me to go to dental school."

Mrs. Evans narrative also revealed an opportunity presented to her by a former grade school teacher once she graduated college:

And Mr. Brown who was my principal in elementary school said well I have an opening, Kaye would you come and take that position. And so I took that position and became a teacher. When I came out of college we were in a situation somewhat like we're in now. Not the moooney . . . I guess it's not money . . . there wasn't a lot of positions for teachers. Sooo the only position that was open was back at Woods which had then become a junior high school and I had to work with exceptional ed children which was not my major but if I wanted a job . . . I said okay I'll take it. So I took that job

Mrs. Evans shared a similar experience once she obtained her Master's degree.

I taught ummm, a 5K summer school program at Greenwood that summer. And ahh an assistant principal position became open after Mr. Barnes had been in to see me to teach that class he said Mrs. Graham would you please apply for the assistant principals job? I was like no, I don't want to be in administration. I wanna be with the children, in the classroom. Or helping teachers as a curriculum coordinator. And so I let, ummm the experience go past me. Then he came back to me about a week later and said I'm opening up the job again. You are to apply for this position. So I said, okay, I'll apply.

Mrs. Evans shared that she was apprehensive about taking the position. She recalled,

"But I worried about . . . would I be able to . . . .handle the discipline a whole school of

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700 children." But she took the position and her success as an assistant principal led her to apply for principalships:

> *Maybe three years later I thought okay . . . I'm handling books, I'm handling butts, I'm handling buses. I'm gone lose all of your curriculum knowledge. So you better find something else to do. And that's when I started applying for principal positions. Because I didn't want to spend my career handling books, buses and butts. And ummm, I applied for a job in [Name]. Didn't get it. Ummm, probably was devastated at that time. Because my life has grown so much now than I was back then spiritually. And it really devastated me. But then I had someone call me and say, well there's a principal's position open in Darlington. So I said all these people don't know me and I'll apply for it. So applied for it and end up getting principalship.*

Mrs. Evans key turning points seem to be the culmination of continual protective processes of people who not only became the conduit for the opportunity, but came at a time in her life when she either believed in her abilities and or her external environment provided support. In addition, Mrs. Evans learned about each of her new positions through her established social capital networks. Mindful of a changing context, I note that Mrs. Evans became a principal at a time when it was becoming common to offer women principalships—an 'opportunity' that may not have been as accessible in the past.

I posit that Mr. Seas' narrative also demonstrated social and cultural capital intersecting with pivotal timing in his life. Mr. Seas reported that his return to college at the age of 25was prompted by brief policy changes made to teacher education certification. On January 9, 1996 the South Carolina State Legislature introduced and made a decision that would have an impact on many potential educators (Appendix F). After having presented an amendment on teacher education to the House, the Committee on Education passed through the House and Senate changes to the testing requirements of teacher education. For Mr. Seas this amendment meant an opportunity to obtain his bachelor's degree. An opportunity he was sure to not let pass him by.

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Mr. Seas explained his inability to perform well on the test the first three times as a result of his text anxiety:

I ah, you know people have test anxieties and all and I think that's what was my biggest thing so ahhh . . . but I passed it and that opened the door. That opened one door; I said now I'm go back and see what I have to do to . . . get my degree.

He also tied it to possibly having attention deficit disorder. He stated, "Reading what's gets me. I'm not a very good reader. 'Cause I think I have attention deficit and I never got diagnosed with it." Yet, when asked if he had plans to go back to college before the letter in the mail arrived Mr. Seas answers, "Oh no. I would probably be Kalamazoo right now. In retail."

Mr. Seas' experiences seem to demonstrate the timing of a key turning point intersecting with several factors. First, Mr. Seas says that had he not been presented with this particular opportunity he would not have returned to college. Second, Mr. Seas' decision to re-take the test demonstrates his resilient response. It is quite possible that Mr. Seas could have declined to re-take the test for the fourth time, yet apparently Mr. Seas believed that taking the test a fourth time was not only worth his time and effort, but also suggests that he believed that he could pass.

Thus, I interpret Mr. Seas' actions in this case as responding or adapting positively. It could be argued that here Mr. Seas was supported in his self-efficacy by the fact that he was experiencing success at managerial position he'd worked his way up to in the nine years he'd been out of school. It could also be argued that Mr. Seas' decision to 'seize' this opportunity was also based on his responsibilities. In keeping with being aware of a changing context, when the letter arrived for Mr. Seas was a married man with children.

And what I made being in the management trainee program, is actually was more than what I would've made as a teacher. But I didn't want to do that. After nine years of working seven days a week, base salary, at 52 hours a week, you only getting' paid for 52, I set my goal at being an educator, I can work 80 hours a week and my family can be a part of that . 'Cause your kids can come be part of the school and be part of athletics

Mr. Seas also revealed that he did believe standardized testing to present barriers to students and felt that standardized testing may have unfairly prohibited him from getting back into college:

'Cause ahhh, that's why I think tests . . . to base things on a test to me has no purpose. I know it's good to take tests and see where you are knowledge wise, but there's so many barriers, or anxieties that people have about doing stuff like that. The real person can't be . . . the real person?? . . . based on a test. You know, my work ethic didn't come from taking a test. My motivation and drive didn't come from taking a test. You know? Sometimes common sense goes a lot farther than book sense.

It is clear that Mr. Seas key 'opportunity' to go to college, and his positive response and ability to get in, changed the trajectory of his life. Had he not replied to the letter, re-taken the test, passed the test, and agreed to re-take courses the college had now grandfathered in, it does not seem as if Mr. Seas would have achieved his goal of becoming a first-generation college graduate. Furthermore, the intersection of protective processes is seen as intersecting with his evolved sense of self-efficacy and esteem when Mr. Seas graduated college. Moreover, Mr. Seas was supported and extended even more social capital from his high school basketball coach upon graduating.

And ahhh I went back . . . he . . . I did my student teaching under him. And basically said when you get finished we'll have a job for you. Well, when I got finished they said that they didn't have a job. So my mentor which was David's brother was the Superintendent in Blackville, so he said why don't you go to Blackville and apply. I'll call my brother and tell him that you're coming. Well when I got here they had a contract waiting for me. I . . . they didn't even kind of interview me. They just was ready. 'Cause I wasn't gone graduate into June and this was in April. So I signed the contract when I graduated. I started here. But I had to teach out of my field because they didn't have a PE open. So I taught

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science my first my first. and then the next year three PE jobs came open. So it was easy for them to put me in one of them PE slots. And 15 years later I'm still here.

The sudden death of Mr. Seas town's mayor was the most recent key turning point that appears to intersect with 'opportunity '/timing and overall presented another potential career trajectory.

Actually, I was on council, town council, around 8 months. And our mayor got killed in a car accident. And ahh, they had a special election to fill his spot. There was 5, 6 of us runnin'. I really didn't have a desire to be a mayor. But ahh, people encourage me . . . they think, thought I'd be a good person to be in that seat. So I ran. And ahh, I was surprised on the turnout. 'Cause, out of . . . I think I got 54% of the vote. So, and this is my second term, and I run unopposed last term. And I got a year into my four years on my term

Mr. Smith's key turning points in his life appears to have taken place at a time in his life when he'd just finished his five year career in the Canadian football league due to an injury.

Didn't wanna work. Had a little money. You know, didn't want no job. Had some money and umm, I got a call from a guy. Henry Williams, asking me did I want a job. I told him man, I don't want no job. He talkin' bout work, I didn't want no job. Had a little money. After about 8 months . . . having a good time . . . young kids and parlaying . . . all that good stuff, I called him back up. I said hey . . . you still got that job? You still got that job? [laughing] He said man sure, come on

Mr. Smith did not state that he was interested in finishing his college degree when he was initially released from his football contract. In fact almost a year, and eight months had passed and Mr. Smith ran out of money before he seemed to consider returning to college. This is also illustrated by the fact that he received a phone call about a job in education and he turned it down. It is not clear if he would've completed his college degree if it was not for him running out of money.

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Mr. Smith's being given an ultimatum to obtain his Master's degree serves as another example of this type of key turning point. At this time in Mr. Smith's career he was coaching and an administrative assistant in the high school he worked for.

> *It was about 8 or 9 of us that they told, say look you all are in administration . . . We're paying you as an administrator, you all are gonna have to get your administration degree. If you don't get your administrative degree, we gone have to put you back down to a different level. I said okay cool.*

Mr. Smith explained that some of the eight or nine people did not comply with the districts ultimatum. He explains that *he* was able to comply and others were not due to several reasons, one being his own plan to move forward in his career and education:

> *I ended up gettin' into graduate school because of the fact that I knew a direction I wanted to go. Been undergrad at South Carolina State. And I wanted to get into grad school because of the fact that I wanted my grad degree so I could move around a bit.*

And secondly, because he was able to perform 'under pressure':

> *They ask you to do it, that's why I went and got it. Did I need to do it before then, yes! But did I do it? No! Some people said I'm not gone do it. Didn't do it. Same thing you can think of people that having a family working, you got to make a decision. Do I want to do classwork in the afternoon, I done work all day? This, this this, and it goes right back to when we talked about when people have to stop work, because the fact that they had to help the families didn't finish high school . . . my parents. 'Cause they had to help families, but if they job had a said, well you know you gone have to do this to keep your job they probably would have did some things differently. But that wasn't put upon them. It was put upon me . . . and . . . is that success? Could be . . . do it look like it? I don't know.*

Just as we have seen with the other three participants, Mr. Smith's key turning points also intersected with the timing of social capital. Had he not been injured and received a call from a friend would he have gone back to college? Or would he be in education today? These questions remain unanswered for various reasons, primarily, because no one has to power to predict alternate life paths. However, it is appears that the life events presented to Mr. Smith, leaving college before graduating, becoming

injured and having to rebuild a career at an early age and running though one's finances in less than a year, he adapted to all positively. All of these adverse experiences could have served to prevent Mr. Smith from going back to finish his degree, both for undergraduate and graduate. However, he attested to being able to respond well under pressure a trait he could have very well developed in his leadership roles and success in athletics.

In conclusion, the participants' narratives appear to confirm that, "Children are seldom raised exclusively within the confines of their nuclear families; rather they are raised embedded in social networks, which extend out into various social worlds where a wide variety of socialization actors and spheres are found" (Stanton-Salazar, p. 7,1997). As demonstrated in their narratives, the participants' social, financial, and cultural capital was enhanced by natural mentors offering support and information pertaining to college access and careers. In addition, the participant's enhanced capital trilogy intersected with a changing context, their developed resilience, and times of opportunities. What is most interesting here is how the participants had access to influential and knowledgeable social networks, despite the fact that they possessed seemingly less valued social and cultural capital (Hardaway and McLoyd, 2009). Accordingly, I argue the participants' access to certain social networks worked as protective processes to support their ending generational poverty.

Bourdieu (2007; 1974, 1973), Lareau (2003) and Portes (2005) all find that culture and capital as multifaceted. Consequently, while dominant cultural, social, and financial capitals are most likely to be beneficial in helping students obtain a college degree, the participants' disproved this theory. Moreover, while they may not have

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possessed much capital or behaved in ways that are validated by dominant cultural capital, their natural mentors' financial, social, and cultural capital proved just as valuable to buffer such limitations.

The participants' narratives revealed that at arbitrary times they experienced significant assistance, support, and information from natural mentors. Dr. Jeffrey and Mr. Seas reported experiences with long term natural mentors. Dr. Jeffrey's narrative revealed support from Mr. Dean from the time he was a young boy until Mr. Dean's death a year ago. Mr. Dean offered Dr. Jeffrey support by means of re-directing maladaptive behavior and offering guidance on how to apply college and the 'right' major to pursue. Mr. Sea's long term natural mentor, his pastor, who he'd known since he was a young boy, supported he and his family upon his father's untimely death. Mr. Seas reported that his pastor still offers his support and encouragement today.   Mr. Seas, Mr. Smith and Mrs. Evans also received information, volunteered by natural mentors, about successfully applying to college. Also importantly noted in this section is the fact that the participant's met their respective natural mentors through serendipitous interactions. As evidenced by Dr. Jeffrey's happenstance meeting with Mr. Dean and the Bethel's. Serendipitous interactions were also evident in the participant's respective natural mentor's willingness to pass on pertinent information about college as well as encouragement to the participant's. I suggest that the participants' access to social and cultural resources, support, care, and concern undergirds the importance of natural mentors in the participants' lives. I also posit that the natural mentors in the participants' lives, whether long-term or brief, affirm Caspi (2004) and Erickson et al. (2009) assertions that caring mentors may have positive influences on the mentee in modifying

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maladaptive behaviors. The participant's relationships with natural mentors, which led to an extension of the natural mentors social capital networks, their ability to develop resilient responses to adversity within their respective changing contexts and the timing of lives also represented such factors can culminate into key turning points for the participant's. This was primarily seen with Mr. Deans' advice to Dr. Jeffrey to attend college and what major to pursue in an effort to keep him from being drafted into the Vietnam war. Lastly, I interpret the organic, close, nurturing relationships with natural mentors as protective processes which served to increase the likelihood of resilient responses by the participants.

In the next section I examine *how* the participants talk about success, in general, and how they address their own success in particular. I first draw from the participant's frequent use of inner resources as a means to explain success. Next, I examine the ways in which the participants' narratives seemed to be informed by archetypal success master narratives. Consequently, I make use of Benoit's (1997) study of success stories that parallel the examination of notions of the American Dream (Hochschild, 2001; McNamee & Miller, 2009) and the Protestant work-ethic (Weber, 1930; DeVitis & Rich, 1996) to analyze the participants' responses as they pertains to success.

Research Question 3: How do they make meaning of their own success in ending generational poverty?

In her research of success stories, Benoit (1997) determined that, "Success is thus socially construed because it is dependent on the values of a social group" (p. 5). In light of Benoit's assertion that success is relative to an individual's or group's belief system, and, thus, somewhat ambiguous, I wanted to better understand how the study participants defined success; their answers varied.

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Of the group, Dr. Jeffrey was the only participant who defined success as setting and achieving a specified goal: *"Ah, success. Setting goals and you know, reaching them, you know."* Mrs. Evans defined success differently. She shared with me that, in the past, she would have defined success based on material possessions. Now, she bases her own success on her ability to avoid attachment to material items. She shared:

> *I define success in different ways because of where I am now in my life. Because you know. Now there was a time when I would have said having money, having a car, having a house would be success. But now I see success from a spiritual standpoint. And because my heavenly Father has allowed me to achieve those things I guess that's how I see being successful now. Ummm, I'm not gone te . . . 'cause my pastor preached about this Sunday. How many of yall would follow God if he came down and took everything you had right now?*

Mr. Seas also stated that he did not define success by material things:

> *Cause ah, people lose . . . that's a perception that area. People may look at success he's successful 'cause he's got a lot of money. He's successful because he's the president of some company. But to me success is more than just being a president or a mayor . . . it's what you've done to make a difference on others. Whether it be a friend or someone that can provide a need for someone that can need it. You know, sometimes people come up and ask me for money and I won't, I won't see'em again. So but, I don't take that as a . . . they needed it. I'm sure they needed it for something. Or they wouldn't have asked me.*

Mr. Smith agreed with Mr. Seas that success was helping or making a difference in other's lives. However, Mr. Smith's response varied from Mr. Seas in that he stated success is relative:

> *I don't know. I think success can be measured in a lot of different ways. And what I mean by that is you can measure yourself by success for instance, I finished middle school, that was success. I finished high school that was success. I finished college that was success. All the other things that we talked about I consider as success. But the only thing I like to measure, I like to measure also is what . . . do you do in the next chapter to help someone else?*

The participants' responses support research that defining success is difficult and fraught with ambiguity (Benoit, 1997; Goldstein & Smucker, 1986). Two of the

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participant indicated money or materials possessions as a derivative of success; this is not uncommon (Schuster et al., 1989; Huber, 1971; Hochschild, 1995; DeVitis & Rich, 1996). For example, Mrs. Evans mentioned, "Now there was a time when I would have said having money, having a car, having a house" as indicative of success and Mr. Seas stated "People may look at success he's successful 'cause he's got a lot of money. He's successful because he's the president of some company." The literature, however, links success not only to material possessions, but also to ethics, morals, and values (DeVitis et al, 1996). Indeed, there is an intricate and important connection between our capitalist society and how individuals choose to make a living and the values inherent in this choice. Accordingly, I wish to demonstrate how the participants' definitions of success were connected to character traits of morality, values, and ethics.

Success: Definitions, discourses, and the protestant work ethic.

Definitions of success. Researchers who study the notion of success in America contend that while defining success may be ambiguous, common themes are often apparent in people's definitions of success. DeVitis and Rich (1996) contend that, "The ideal of success is found in the American Dream[31], which is probably the most potent ideology in American life" (p.4). Early American discourse around the Protestant work ethic[32] "encouraged humans to be productive, to work hard, and to advance materially"

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[31] I make use of DeVitis et al. (1996), McNamee and Miller (2009 and Lareau (2003) concepts of the American Dream as the belief that anyone regardless of class, race, sex or gender can become successful if they work hard.

[32] I draw from McNamee and Miller (2009) examination of the Protestant work ethic to be a derivative of Protestant religious beliefs and the Calvinists belief of predestination," Which meant that people did not earn salvation but were "elected" to it by God. This belief created among the followers what Weber called 'salvation anxiety', which led individuals to attempt to ascertain whether they were among the elec. Individual's came to believe that worldly success could be taken as a sign of God's grace. So driven by salvation anxiety, people worked very hard to become successful so that they could demonstrate to themselves and others that they were among the elect"(p. 5)

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(DeVit et al., 1996), consequently, the Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1930) is embedded in notions of what it takes to be successful in America.

It is imperative to understand that, in light of the participants having grown up in America, elements of their educational journey suggested their use of the 'American dream script,' or narrative wherein success is a product of hard work and merit (Hochschild, 1995). Dr. Jeffrey's definition of success reflects this notion of advancement. Yet, Mrs. Evans and Mr. Seas define success in more depth. In fact, Hochschild (1995) contends, "a definition of success involves measurement as well as content." (p. 16) and identified three main themes often found in definitions of success: absolute "reaching some threshold of well-being," relative "becoming better off than one comparison point," and competition, where an individual may perceive that "my success implies your failure."(p.16) Equating success with material things, as Mrs. Evans and Mr. Smith did, correlates with Hochschild's view of success as being seen as absolute, while Mr. Smith's response demonstrates Hochschild's framing of success as relative.

Success defined by morals. Weber (1930) and DeVitis et al. (1996) identified a connection between success in financial attainment and ethics. In colonial America, the discourse on what success was and how it should be achieved aligned with Protestant views. There were strong beliefs that self-denial, hard work, and self-improvement were deemed the 'right' ways to obtain wealth. Weiss (1988) notes that the *McGuffey Reader* also supported the line of thinking that immoral accumulation of wealth would lead to one's downfall. Weiss reports that McGuffey was one of the first in a long line of self-help books. In order to deter people from pursuing illegal methods to become financially successful, McGuffey assured readers that:

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in the long run men paid a high price for easy money", "Sudden wealth, especially when obtained by dishonest means, rarely fails of bringing with it sudden ruin." Men "beggared in morals" are soon "beggared in property". Their riches are corrupted "and will bring the curse of God on their immediate possessors, they usually entail misery and ruin upon their families." (McGuffey, as cited in Weiss, 1998, pg. 34)

However, as a product of success, wealth, when obtained in a forthright fashion, could be redefined "not as an evil of self-indulgence but as just reward for hard work" (McNamee and Miller, 2009, p. 6). Financial success, as a derivative of social ethic or virtue, also has roots in Benjamin Franklin's notion of the self-made man as demonstrated in *Poor Richard's Almanack*. DeVitis et al. find that, in the early 1700s, the discourse on character traits which sustain the self and eventually lead to wealth began with the dissemination of *Poor Richard's Almanack.*

This notion of success as having an association with ethics or values is evident in Mrs. Evans' statement that she is oft times conflicted with defining success based on material possessions. She asserted that she feels as if she should define success based on spirituality—based on her belief that her 'heavenly Father allowed' her to have material possessions. Mrs. Evans response seems to undergird the notions of the Protestant work ethic as seen in her desire to practice a detachment to material items, and her attributing her acquisition of material items to a higher power. Seemingly, embedded in Mrs. Evans' definition of success is the notion that character, morals, and values play a part in contributing to the maintenance of one's success. Mrs. Evans also invoked religious character traits as being associated with success in her references to her pastor preaching about losing or doing without material possessions.

Success defined by service. Mrs. Seas and Mr. Smith defined success as the ability to help someone. I interpret their definition of success as having elements of the

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service component of the success ethic. DeVitis et al. (1996) find that service, as a

defining characteristic of success, also has roots in the Protestant work ethic. Service

ethic contains elements of the Protestant ethic in that it relates to the Puritan view that,

"People should become instruments of God's will on earth and were called upon to

transform the world and remake it in God's image, what Weber called "world mastery"

(McNamee et al., 2009, p. 5)." DeVitis et al. argue that people who define success

according to their ability to help others may base this association this on one of four

grounds:

> They assumed a naïve belief in human perfectibility and societal progress; that a
> psychological need for power over others, however camouflaged or subtle, might
> lie at the root of their seemingly altruistic impulses; and that many of their social
> reforms may actually have yielded cultural mechanism of political manipulations
> and social control. (p. 66)

In essence, it would appear that Mr. Seas and Smith's responses revolve around the belief

that success, for them, is also defined in relation to morality. For both participants, I

argue that they convey a sense that helping someone is seen as contributing to helping

society as a whole.

 Factors associated with success. Acknowledging the many definitional

dimensions of success, here I draw on DeVitis et al.'s (1996) assertion that there are

common themes associated with *how* one is to achieve success or some form of the

American Dream. Scholars have found having certain traits such as talent, high moral

character, mind power-resilience, personality, the right attitude, and service as being

common themes associated with how to achieve success (DeVitis et al, 1996; McNamee

et al, 2009). Moreover, Hochschild (2001) asserts that derivatives of the American

Dream ideology are associated with commonly held ideals that, "everyone has the right to

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pursue success but that only some deserve to win, based on their talents, energy, or ambition" (P. 37).

Consequently, I seek to analyze the character traits or values that the four participants' believe contributed to their ability to achieve success. To do so, I examine the participants' own beliefs regarding whether they consider themselves to be successful or not. I then compare their assessment of their own perceived success, or not, with their given definitions of success. I also make use of the participants' responses regarding the factors they believe are needed in order to become successful. In determining their success, the participants' responses inevitably include some reference to how *they* contributed to their own success or what they have accomplished thus far. Condly (2006) finds these correlations relevant as:

> Research has shown that resilient adults typically attribute their status to a dogged determinism, held throughout childhood that they would conquer their circumstances, that they were people of worth and value, and that they had the inner resources to succeed. (p. 219-220)

Already successful. When asked whether or not they believed themselves to be successful. Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans answered a definitive "yes." Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans also made statements about perceiving their success as relative meaning they seem to feel that they are better off than they were growing up. In a follow-up interview, Dr. Jeffrey illustrated this with regards to his education level, as well as other factors:

> *I think I'm successful look at what I . . . beginning. My background, I came from and where I'm at now. Ahh, as far as education, ahh and where I'm at in society. You know those are the things I look at as successful. And having some of the things I always wanted. Living the way I want to live. I consider that . . . this is successful. Or what I saw some people as a kid. What I was growing up. I consider them some of the models I wanted to live like they, like they were living. And I wasn't there at that point and I wanted to be there. And ah I knew I had to do it myself. Because I knew that my mother was not there.*

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Dr. Jeffrey defined his success based on his elevated rank and status. He also validated his elevated rank later in his educational narrative by sharing with me an invitation he'd received to join an affluent organization known as 'the Boule´'.

Yeah you don't hear about it that much now. But when I was . . . .there was an organization called the Boule´. Like a fraternal organization. Boule´. It's everywhere now. And I started hearing about it around here. And Dr. McFadden, who was a dentist across the street, he used to ask me about it. And he would say," you want to go down to the convention with the Boule´s? The Boule´ convention?" I said I don't know what that is. What is that? He said "its ah an organization, a fraternal organization "he says ah, "it's a bunch of black folks" he says, says "I'm thinking it's just a bunch of wannabes" He says for a better word "a bourgeois nigger"s. That's what he said bourgeois, bourgeois niggers. He says "any time they got to look into your bank account to determine your net worth to let you into an organization you don't, you don't want to be a part of it". So I told Charles [Dr. McFadden] here, he asked me if I wanted to be a member. He could, the fact that his daddy was, who was a dentist, was a member that automatically made him a member.

Lawrence Graham (1999) explains that the Boule´, officially known as Sigma Pi Phi, is an elite organization made up of professional Blacks. Founded in 1904, Graham asserts that the Boule´ were the "first elite national black men's club" who selected members on the sole basis of their professional accomplishments. All of their official activities and social gatherings are black-tie affairs and all its members receive an official burial or cremation ceremony. Graham also explained that the Boule´:

> Is older than all of the black college fraternities and it is the quintessential organization for professional black men, members are not considered until they are well beyond college and graduate school. It is considered by many *the* elite men's club, and its membership has included the most accomplished, affluent, and influenced black men in every city for the last ninety years. (p.130)

Embedded within Dr. Jeffrey's descriptions of his perceived success are explanations regarding on how he was able to overcome different adversities. For example, he states that he was able to see how others were "living" and somehow channel this desire to do better into knowing he had to 'do it [become successful] for himself'.

Dr. Jeffrey also reported that his ability to become successful was due in part to his own

determination:

> *Determination. You gotta be determined. Ahh . . . you gotta claim it. You know you just gotta decide that this is what . . . I want a better life than what I had as a child, what my . . . in my case what my mother could give me.*

When asked why he thought he was successful when his peers were not, Dr. Jeffrey also

noted determination as a factor in achieving success. He noted, "I guess it has a lot to do

with the determination and its just, some people are just determined to get out of that

situation."

In addition, he added that success is a result of knowing the "rules":

> *Know the rules or whatever. Whatever you do you just gotta know the rules and how to get there. And ahh, early on like I said, I had to have a lot of guidance. Because if it wasn't for Mr. Dean and those guys. Dean and [the] Bethels and Coach Keller I'm sure I wouldn't have made it. And Mr. Wright who ran the TV repair shop. Wouldn't have made it. 'Cause they were always sort of, no don't do it that way, don't do it that way. Don't' do that, don't' do that, don't' do that. And they exposed me to a different way of life. You know, 'cause if I had stayed around the house and this neighborhood I'd still be there.*

He further stated that his success was a result of his 'worth' and 'value' and gave further

credit to his own inner abilities:

> *But ahh, those are people that sort of helped me and kept me straight. And they didn't have to do a lot. But just from an academic point they had to do nothing really. And this is what they saw I think that he's pretty bright, you know let's just keep him out of trouble, keep him on the straight and narrow.*

In addition to acknowledging his inner resources, Dr. Jeffrey also gave credit to the

natural mentors in his life:

> *I've had a lot of I guess influences, you know people who sort of kept me going the right way. Annd it was the people around me you know you couldn't do it all yourself. But I've always known I've wanted to do . . . have a better life than what the folks around me had as a child. Growing up I knew that. (gets real low) And . . . .I was sort of aggressive about it, I had to go at it you know ahh,*

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Mrs. Evans also defined her own success in several ways. First, she defined her success based on her ability to evolve spiritually.

> *I guess right now my success is my spiritual life. Because I want to be, want to know more and be . . . .I guess I want to be more spiritual than I am. That's the way I want to grow and say I'm successful . . . . Yeah . . . I guess I'm successful in the material things. But the material things don't make me who I am. Ummm, my friendships. People who I respect. Ummm, that's where I am now. I'm not gone lie and tell you there wasn't a time when all that stuff wasn't important. And I'm not gone tell you I would like to lose all of it. 'Cause I'm not gone say I would like to lose it all. But I guess my spiritual life is the most important thing to me now, 'cause that's what determined my success. 'Cause I want to go to heaven. [laughs] At least I my life I have phases of success. Because there was a time when I would've said. My job, my money, my status was being successful. But my spiritual life now defines success for me.*

Mrs. Evans also defined her success in relation to relative factors that included achieving what her parents were not financially able to do:

> *Umm, because my parents never got to experience all that I experienced in my life. So I know I have made it from where I used to be to where I am now. And I've made it. I guess the thing that I'd like to say is that I've made it honest. I have not made it by hurting any other individual. Ummm, I made it on my true merits with the help of the Lord. And, and I think, I guess that's how I define my success.*

And third, Mrs. Evans reported that she is successful in comparison to others:

> *Because when I look back at some of the people who are seen as the . . . the children who had more, going to school with me and they haven't achieved what I have achieved, I tend to say no . . . they have not been successful, so there's still that fine line where I kinda bounce back and forth and I do look at those material things and what you do in your life as being successful. But I really want to reach that other side where my spiritual. 'Cause there all . . . everything I have is a lesson. So, but my, the spiritual part of my life is what I want to define me, just being successful. And I feel like I have made it.*

When asked to evaluate why she thought she was successful and some of her peers were not, Mrs. Evans compared her inner resources to that of her peers:

> *And I don't know if this was just my feeling there were certain children as I was going through school I think were seen as being more privileged then I as because, even though our incomes were similar, okay there were some who had a little more. And those more privileged people, I don't think they achieved as much*

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as I have. I really don't. I think it's because I was poor and in my heart I wanted more and to do better and because of my upbringing I, I just . . . and even today I strive to make sure whatever I do I am successful with that agenda item.

She further shared with me that her success was a result of recognizing the importance of earning what you want:

No, I guess I think about myself, nobody is gonna is give you, or at least when I was growing up, was gone give you anything. You had to earn everything. And I wanted my own personal child to grow up thinking you have to earn everything. And that's the way he grew up. That he must earn everything.

Mrs. Evans went on to attribute her success, over others in her immediate family, to her desire to "have more", her 'drive' or ability to press on, combined wanting to do her very best:

And I guess I've always wanted more. And that drive in me and wanting more has always made me do my very best. No matter what it is, whether it's my job, whether its cleaning my house, whether it's at church, whatever it is I have a drive to say do your very best and I think that came from my dad. I really do. I just wonder how my life would've been if he had lived I really do.

Mrs. Evans also mentioned inner resources such as drive in contributing to her getting to college

I was [a baby. And neither, I have . . . one of my sisters is deceased. But I had two sisters and one brother. My brother started in college at Benedict. But went for two years and stopped. And neither one of my sisters went, so I was the only one in the family to I guess have that inner drive to want to go to college.

Mrs. Evans also stated that she recognized her teachers as having a desirable lifestyle. In her educational journey, she shared with me her admiration for where they lived and how they dressed. Mrs. Evans reported that these close-up representations of a more financially stable life made her realize that obtaining a college degree made a difference in the lives of individuals. Furthermore, these images served to ignite an inner knowing in her:

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All my teachers and I knew they all had college degrees and they all lived a different life then I lived. Or at least I thought they did. And I just thought okay. In order to live like they're living I've got to go to college because in my community nobody had gone to college. So I saw how my whole community lived. And I knew. This group was living a different way because they had a college degree. And we were living a different way because our parents did not have a college degree. And so I knew that a college degree as a factor that was making the difference. So I knew it was something.

Still striving for success. Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith both declared that they did not

see themselves as being successful quite yet. Mr. Seas offered

Well . . . . I'm headed to success. Because . . . I am making an impact on students' lives. And the community lives that will make a difference in their life and you know the personal things, the accomplishments [I don't think that's really success, that's something to prepare you to be successful, for instance all this . . . being president, being mayor, being involved in all these other activities is actually giving you the knowledge of preparation to help in the needs that others have. For instance, being mayor, I can help a whole community.

When asked if he did not think becoming mayor of a town was a marker of success, Mr.

Seas answered that "*a lot of people look at that as being successful,*" yet, he does not. He

elaborated more on his perceived success when asked about his achievement of becoming

a first generation college graduate.

Well you know, my kids say I am successful. And they, you know I'm gonna have two college graduates within the next three years. And maybe four in the next five years so, ahh . . . well not four, well three in the next five years. My little rugrat, he'll be coming on out. But I think my kids would look at me as being successful because the drive was right out of high school to go to college. There was no thinking about it. See when I came out of high school, I was thinking about it . . . . I wasn't really driven to go to college. So my influences to go to college, graduate finish my master's degree that put, that instilled in them that's what they had to do. I didn't tell them to do it. But, they . . . they did it. It wasn't an option, where with me it was an option. So, I think it influences tremendously. When you're coming through, the drive from what they see and what they hear on success. And I'm ecstatic that my kids want to go to college. It's something I ain't forced them to do.

Mr. Seas did not definitively declare success in the way that Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans

did. Rather, he seemed to connect his success with his ability to effectively model to his

sons the desire to obtain a college degree. When asked what he felt was needed in order

to become successful. Mr. Seas also attributed drive as a factor:

> *Cause if you don't have the work ethic I keep telling people. The work ethic that you have is almost like your integrity. Because if you go to a job, and just happy to have a job to get a paycheck, you gone see that. And the employer is not going to trust you a lot to get the job done. But if you go there with the drive and determination to do the best job you can do, the employer's gone to see that too and that's going to reflect on your integrity. And that will take you a lot further then you just going in to get a paycheck. And it may lead to something else. You know doors open based on how people perceive sometimes what you're doing. You know, you can be just kind of goofing off and your times coming. But if you're one that's a go getter and they looking for next position person for maybe management or president or maybe vice president of a company . . . soo . . .*

When asked about why he felt his parents did not finish high school, Mr. Seas did not

specifically state that his parents did not have enough drive. Instead, he made mention of

the importance of taking initiative and being driven after he recalled many of his parents

and their peers getting married and dropping out of high school:

> *But, ahhh, you gotta have some inner drive if you want to be successful. You can't just assume somebody's gonna do it for you. I just think the struggles that I saw my parents go through just made me more motivated on doing what I had to do . . . .to ge. . . to be successful at what I do.*

Despite Mr. Sea's declarations of the need for inner resources, he also reported that he

felt mentors were the most important in helping one to become successful. He noted,

"But I think the most important thing is being a . . . having someone??A mentor kind of

go over some opportunities that they have . . . and . . . and express their life stories."

Later, Mr. Seas spoke about the importance of mentors in offering guidance. Mr. Seas

confirmed that being close to his family contributed to his success or achievements today:

> *'It's just family and people you're close to how they direct you and how they guide you will sometimes determine where you end up. We didn't have a community type atmosphere growing up. We wasn't in a town. Where you get a lot more influences town based, country based . . . you know, when you live in a community there's a lot of influences. 'Cause you have the streets and people get on the streets and if they don't have something to do then they start hanging out,*

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then things come up and that's when choices have to be made and peer pressure really takes on. But we live out in the country and all we saw was woods. [laughs] You know and I think the guidance of your parents and your relatives are more obvious.

Mr. Seas also went on to confirm the need of parents support, particularly in low-income

areas:

'Cause ahh. I think it's important. Yeah, I would think that that's a major, major part of being successful. What kind of influence you parents have on you. Ahhh, and support.
Yeah, yeah. But, that's, that's the support. You have to have a support to be successful. Somewhere, you know I'm gonna support my kids to be successful. You know, and that's some things that our kids, you know like you said low-income areas that don't have a support system to become successful. So they're out there wondering, you know, that's where I feel like we as adults that have opportunity to step in their lives and help lead and guide them.

Mr. Seas mentioned 'drive', an inner resource, as something he observed and learned

from a natural mentor in addition to the 'drive' he felt his mentor saw in him.

I think I learned a lot from him on the organizational things you need to know when you get out on your own. And some of the determination just through watching him coach. But then, I got my job here and I got to work with some other influential people. Ahhh, Coach Able was the athletic director here before I took over after he retired and I took over his spot. He guided me. He knew I wanted to be; I had the drive to be an athletic director. So he brought me in, he let me do the things that an athletic director did.

The theme of inner resources, as a means of supporting Mr. Seas in becoming successful,

was also present when he was asked why he was not aware of the college preparation

courses he needed to take in high school. Mr. Seas declared that his own initiative or

lack thereof, played a part in his eventual lackluster high school academic record:

I can't give . . . all the credit to high school. Okay [laughs] . . . 'cause ahh . . . I just feel like, I was the type of student in high school that was . . . do what I got to do to get by. And . . . sometimes I felt like I was in that . . . if I look back at it now at the time it was a little different I thought I was there to get me out of high school, you know? But if I look back it influenced me to be prepared for the steps of my life. Sometimes I feel like they could've done a better job. Okay? And I could've been a better student too. Now I'm not puttin' all the blame on the high

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school. But I feel like they could've done a better job, I could've done a better job. But, when you don't have the influence at home to look at that from the educational process it's more look at the work that you have to do. You, you don't have that total package where you . . . to be prepared totally for the next level. I just think the drive I had coming out of high school helped me overcome some of the weaknesses I had. And even through college

When asked why he felt some people continue to push through adverse situations to become successful and others do not, Mr. Seas offered:

I just think it's that, that support and somewhere you have to be supported in your weaknesses. 'Cause if you're no supported in your weaknesses, your weaknesses can take over. Because we all have weaknesses. We all have'em. And . . . it's some, it's, some more than others. Some have more in depth than others. But to get over those weaknesses, that's where you have to have the support at. Because if you don't you give up or it takes over. I've just been lucky to be around some good people. And my philosophy about being successful, you have to surround yourself with good people. It ain't on just you. You can make accomplishments but to be real successful you have to have people around you to make you successful. Just like being the mayor. You can't be successful by yourself. You can't. No matter how hard you try, you get people around you, then they see something success in themselves. They'll work hard for you.

Mr. Seas also made use of the term 'drive', or willingness. As a means of encouragement when one must press on in the face of adversity, upon witnessing his parents struggle financially:

Well I saw how my parents struggled with their jobs; working in industry job, coming home barely can, making ends meet. And I said if I ever get the opportunity I'll never be in that situation. And I think that kind of motivated me and my drive on getting my education and trying to go a different route.

In addition, he expressed a belief in the notion that "failure is not an option":

When I got to the point where I struggled through college tests. I always wanted to do that, that was one of my goals. And when I had the opportunity to open back up I just didn't say I wasn't going to do it again. Failure wasn't an issue for me. I wanted to prove that I could get it done. And it was a lot of work. I mean I had to go through a lot of hurdles to get back to be able to take that test again. I had to meet with people, the stress . . . the stress of it. I wrote the governor. I mean all kinds of things.

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Mr. Smith, along with Mr. Seas, stated that he felt he was still working on becoming successful:

> *You know success can be measured in a lot of different ways. I wouldn't say that I am successful but I can tell you I am working on doing the right things in life to help other people to get where I am and beyond.*

When asked if he thought others deemed him successful as a first generation college graduate, Mr. Smith reported that he did not completely agree:

> *I always had a hard time ahhh saying that I am successful. Have I did somethings that are great? Yes. Ummmm,I could've stopped right there. When I was considered in the South Carolina Hall of Fame at South Carolina State, ahh man I been successful, that's it. I can't stop there. That's just something that came before me. One thing I can say, when I look back on my life and where I am at this point. I was very, I was very fortunate to go from one step to the other without getting caught up in things that was politics. Getting caught up in favoritism . . . I'm just one of the stories. There's a whole of them out there. But I'm one of the stories that stayed on the course to move forward in life where I thought or where I think I can go. And . . . the journey just started, it just started for me.*

Mr. Smith's explanation as to how one is able to become successful also included an attributions to one's mindset:

> *The mindset. The mindset and the upbringing. You have, you do have kids that have the correct upbringing that step off track also, but my mindset and the upbringing is something that I never strayed away from. I never strayed away from me making my own decisions. Me not making ???being a follower. That's one thing I never strayed away from. And once you stray away from things that get you where you are???you end up in situations that you really . . . know how you got there, but you are naïve to it. But I just think it's just a willpower of want to. Or wanting to do. And uhh, like I told you I was a leader. My eleventh grade year I was a captain and 12th grade year I was a captain. I consider myself as a leader then. And it was just so many people being from a small town once you cross the threshold as being a leader above and beyond of beating the odds it just so much . . . I think it's so much pressure on you if you don't continue. If you don't reach back and help others. And my, my drive was always to pull back help someone else that I could see that had it in time. If I see it and you got it in you and you don't see it I'm gone put some pressure on you to perform to do things that you probably never did before*

Mr. Smith also tied success to support from family and community:

You . . . gone need support . . . from people. People around you I would say. Of course your immediate, as far as family. But you also gone need extended family. And when you meet??? Extended family a lot of times your extended family is like someone that you never will forget because of the fact that they gone give you something that you never will forget what they gave you.

Mr. Smith offered an example of how he felt family may support one attaining success:

So I'm saying you got to get . . . you get back to the root of issues of your family. How do you overcome the odds? You overcome it because of the fact that somebody in the family is strong. Somebody in the family gone keep it going. But if everybody is letting it crumble how people gone survive? They gone perish. They gone be perishing, dropping off by the sides. And you don't know why. But I just think it was, it was ahhh, I think family wise and having a support system there to keep things going.

When asked about why he felt his cousin was not successful, he offered that he felt his cousin did not make it in college based on his cousin's family not giving him the opportunity to 'man up':

And I blame his brother. I said look, you ain't got to take the blame. It's on you. If you hadda left him up there, let him become a man college. Let him see some things and do some things differently, he'da been better off. Now he's in and out of prison. That's the best way you can put it, because the fact that in life you gone start somewhere. I always tell people you have to crawl before you walk. .: I feel like it, because sometimes what happens is there's no way you can skip from being . . . you can go from point A to Z, you missed everything in between.

Lastly, Mr. Smith added that there are 'unwritten things' that relate to understanding how one is to be successful, but that he felt this information was readily available:

It's . . . .??it's a lot of unwritten things. That, I don't care who you are, where you come from, either you got it or you don't. And it ain't hard to pick it up. It's easy. You can bring the smartest person in the world. Certain things they don't have. Might not have no people skills. Just sit there all day, won't talk to you, if you don't talk to them. But they can be the smartest people in the world.

Success and status. Dr. Jeffrey agreed with Mrs. Evans in that they equated their success with their change in status. This is keenly apparent in Dr. Jeffrey's reporting of being asked to join an affluent social organization. Moreover, their revealing of

accumulation of material items and feeling as if they were living vastly different lives than they did when they were children also confirms their belief in their own success. Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans, however, differed in their assessment of success in that Mrs. Evans strives to be successful in her spiritual life and Dr. Jeffrey did not report feeling this way. Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith felt as if their success was still growing and equated any present or future success to their ability to help others. Considering the fact that all four participant's 'beat the odds' in getting out of poverty, it is interesting that only two perceive themselves as being successful.

Moreover, the two participants, Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans, individual definitions of success match the factors by which they define their *own* success. As educators, Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith work in a type of success ethic 'service' type occupation. Mr. Seas works full time as an athletic director of a high school and teacher and Mr. Smith is a high school principal. In addition, Mr. Seas performs acts of service to his community as mayor. Yet, the way in which Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith define success does not seem to match their accomplishments. They do not seem to perceive their own service to others as fitting with their definition.

I interpret this as an example of cultural perceptions of (Weber, 2010) of class rank and status. Dr. Jeffrey reported in his initial interview that with his dental practice alone he makes at least $250,000 a year. He did not disclose how much he makes from his other part-time job as a dentist for a local prison for almost thirty years. Yet it is likely an addition to the quarter of a million dollars that he is already making. Mrs. Evans serves as the assistant superintendent of a school district. According to salary.com the average salary for a school superintendent, in her similar demographic is $128,210. In

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comparison, Mr. Smith's salary is likely around $80,000 and Mr. Sea's salary as an athletic director of a high school is$46,000.

In terms of status, all four participants are well within the perceived middle class spectrum (Pew, 2012). However, making use of Weber's (2010) difference between class status and rank, it is obvious that Dr. Jeffrey would place first and Mrs. Evans second. Consequently, it is my interpretation that perhaps Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans combined high class rank and status may have an influence on the way in which they define their own success. Weber also recognizes a link between status order and economic power. Weber found that, " . . . the caste structure brings about a social subordination and an acknowledgement of 'more honor' in favor of privileged caste and status groups" (p.125). This ability to consume the most stratifies class status, whereas ones relation to production and acquisition of good helps to stratify class rank.

Attributions to success. I now make use of attribution theory to better understand how the participant's utilize inner resources as a necessary attribute in order to achieve success. Attribution theory is concerned with the causal explanation people offer for events (Martinko, 1995; Miller, 1978). Schuster et al (1989) also argued that

> Causal properties, then, are related to expectancy of success and to affective reactions, which are among the main determinants of behavior in achievement and other domains. Thus attribution theory has provided a powerful conceptual tool for the study of a variety of motivational phenomena. (p. 194)

I employ Schuster et al (1989) and Weiner (1986) use of achievement motivation theory, a derivative of attribution theory. Achievement motivation is concerned with the factors that motivated the explanation of causes one attributes to an event. Thus achievement motivation theory is concerned "with how individuals explain their own successes and failures and the consequences of those explanations" (Martinko, 1995, p.

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8). Furthermore, Schuster et al (1989) contend there are three major causal dimensions found in achievement theory: locus, wherein one finds the causes of success or failure to be a result of internal or external factors; stability, causes of success of failure are the result of constant or varying factors over time; and controllability, where the participants' perceive personal responsibility or "volitional influence" to have an impact on their success. Martinko also noted that these three dimensions may overlap in an explanation of certain events.

As mentioned earlier, all of the participants defined success differently. All participants' also had varying perceptions about their own success and about how one is to become successful. The participants belief that inner resources are needed to become successful was a common finding. I interpret the participants' verbal proclamation that success (for themselves and others) is dependent upon inner resources to be an attribution of the casual dimensions of locus, stability, and controllability. All participants' felt their inner resources had been with them all of their life. Mrs. Evans stated, "I've always wanted more" in reference to being driven. Dr. Jeffrey stated "I always felt that I had to be the best." Mr. Seas states that he had the "drive in him" several times throughout his educational narrative and Mr. Smith acknowledges that people helped him along the way because of things people saw in him.

I interpret the multiple occasions when participants revealed an inner resource in some manner to mean they felt this was a factor which remained stable throughout their lifetime. The word "drive," as a means to achieving success was used by the participants a total of ten times. The participants also made use of such words as "determination." In particular, Dr. Jeffrey felt that these inner resources were something that you are either

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born with or not. He described his inner resources as "I knew I had to do it myself" and being "aggressive about having a better life." Mrs. Evans' 'inner resource script' included believing that living in poverty made her want more out of life and, as a result, made her want to do better - she "knew she had to do something" to get to college. Mr. Smith shared that seeing his parents struggle "motivated" him and that he was driven in high school and college. He further stated that his "mindset" to never stray from the path of success and his willpower of "want to" both contributed to him being a first generation college graduate.

When the participants were asked to go back over their interview to pinpoint the factors they deemed significant in making it, their answers varied again; however, common themes regarding the importance of people were present in each of their notes. Dr. Jeffrey wrote down Mr. Dean, his father, uncle, cousins, teachers, friends, and a 8th grade teacher (Appendix B). Mrs. Evans wrote down a myriad of factors, which included her dad, mother, teachers, husband, seeing how other people lived, and her drive (Appendix C). Mr. Seas wrote down his mother, coaches, colleagues, family, and his pastor (Appendix, D). Mr. Smith wrote down his parents and a high school coach (Appendix A)

Yet, when asked during the interviews what it took to be successful, the participants appeared to favor notions of their own inner resources. Thus, the participants' responses seem to support Martinko's (1995) claim that "Typical self-attributions for achievement include ability, effort, task difficulty, or chance/luck" (p. 9). In addition, the participants' meaning-making of their success also reflected aspects of the Protestant work ethic. Mrs. Evans definition of her success includes her reporting

that she obtained her success by "honest" means, and that in the process of her career she has not "hurt" anyone to become successful. Furthermore, she connected her success to her 'heavenly Father'. Weber (1930) argued that the Protestant ethic of a 'right' and 'wrong' way to make money made its way into cultural notions through Benjamin Franklin and his message that, "The earning of money in the modern economic order is, so long as it is done legally, the result and the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling" (p. 14). Mr. Seas stating that a "hard work ethic" was needed to be taken seriously by others and that it was a requirement to become successful also appears to ring of the Protestant ethic.

I also suggest that Mrs. Evans description of her success is similar to the language used in early American self-help books (Weiss, 1988). Weiss contends that in order to deter people from pursuing illegal means as a way of becoming financially successful, the subsequent rhetoric was often found in the pages of the popular *McGuffey* reader, which assured readers:

> that in the long run men paid a high price for easy money; Sudden wealth, especially when obtained by dishonest means, rarely fails of bringing with it sudden ruin; Men "beggared in morals" are soon "beggared in property". Their riches are corrupted and while bring the curse of God on their immediate possessors, they usually entail misery and ruin upon their families." (p. 34)

I interpret then Mr. Sea's report of hard work and Mrs. Evans reports of obtaining affluence through virtuous means as exemplary of causal explanation of success based on notions of a Protestant work ethic. In both narratives, all three casual dimensions seem to overlap. I interpret that Mrs. Evans and Mr. Seas proclamations to infer that there are inner resources that are needed over time and furthermore these resources are controllable by individuals.

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Discourse around inner resources. Next, I take up Benoit (1997) discursive strategies in analyzing success stories to understand why the participants built their success stories around notions of personal character, particularly given their written accounts of the many ways natural mentors contributed to their success. For Benoit, a success story consists of "a narrative that interprets a behavior as a success, selects and orders events relating to that success, and includes a causal attribution for the success" (p. 24). Furthermore, Benoit argued that "Every statement of praise contains some information-thought not always explicitly- about what is and is not valued" (p. 5).

Benoit (1997), Goffman (1955), Arkin and Herman (2000) studies on discourse and self-presentations found that, in any face-to-face interaction, one is making an attempt to enact behaviors, customs, and even certain ways of speaking to present oneself positively. To do this, Goffman (1955) asserted, a person assumes a certain line, "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (p. 338). Benoit (1997) also argued that presentations of self often have four interrelated motives: self-esteem, identity development, social, and material rewards, and social approval.

In order to understand better how the participants craft their stories of success, I remain mindful of their need to present themselves, and their response to their journey out of poverty, positively. Benoit (1997) argued that success stories are crafted by either claiming or disclaiming success. *Acclaiming self-presentations* can convey entitlement of success by presenting oneself as causal agent, and by perceiving internal causes as responsible for success. Tellers may also utilize acclaiming discursive strategies by enhancing their success "by magnifying "the desirability of the achievement" (p.14). In

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comparison, *disclaiming self-presentations* present the teller in a more modest light. Benoit argued that there is a fine line of walking between the two discursive strategies:

> Tellers must orient to multiple goals in telling their success stories. Tellers who acclaim success may secure recognition but risk attributions of arrogance and bragging. Tellers who disclaim may appear modest but fail to convince audiences to attribute personal responsibility or value the success (p.17)

According to Benoit, tellers of success stories choose to acclaim or disclaim their success based on three factors: audience, source, and event. For instance, a teller may be more likely to disclaim if their audience is familiar with their success. A success story may also take a modest shape if the source (i.e. feelings about self-esteem are low), and feelings surrounding personal control or social anxiety are heightened. Lastly, a success story is impacted by an event and is more likely to disclaim if the teller has to share their success with others while being recognized. All of these factors help to shape the way in which a success stories gets told (Benoit, 1997; O'Keefe & Shepard, 1987).

All four participants, while acknowledging the assistance of natural mentors overall, seemed to credit their inner resources as helpful in carving out their journey to success. Given that success stories are experiences wherein people are conscious of their image and overall self-presentation, it appears that the participant's giving credit to natural mentors on paper but not verbally could be due to their attempts to ensure they are indeed sharing a 'valid success story'. Consequently, I interpret that the participants made use of acclaiming discursive strategies in their educational narratives to explain how *they* achieved success. The participants' success stories revealed how they attributed their inner resources to their accomplishments. Thus, I suggest that they may perceive their natural mentors as supporting actors, more as factors which served to contribute to their success. Furthermore, it is noted the ways in which the participant's narratives

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reflected the larger discourse on success at it relates to the deployment of inner resources, the American dream and the Protestant work ethic McNamee et al, 2009; Hochschild, 1989; 2001).

Success in context of race and gender. Lastly, in understanding how the participants make meaning of their success, I am aware of the importance of context. Accordingly, I asked the participants if they felt any factors such as race or gender had any impact on their ability to be successful. Dr. Jeffrey, Mr. Smith, and Mrs. Evans confirmed that race impacted on their success. Dr. Jeffrey was the only participant to suggest that both his race and gender had an impact on his overall success. Mr. Seas, the only White participant in this study, reported that he did not feel that his race or his gender impacted his success in anyway.

When asked if he felt his race or gender had any impact on his schooling in a follow up interview Mr. Seas responded

> *I don't think my race or gender had much on my success more than my work ethic. You know I think my work ethic carried me more so than any of the other. Because I didn't go in and whine about this. I did a lot of stuff free you know. Pay was never an issue with me. Even when I took over as AD [athletic director]. I said I'll do it for free if yall can't afford to pay. Because I do it for free. Because, because I see the longevity of it too. You know sometimes getting paid now is not always a benefit. But getting experience now will benefit you later on.*

First, I note that Mr. Seas did not recognize any notions of White privilege as having any influence on his life. While this may be true, I concur with Bonilla-Silva (1997) that racism is subtle. Just as racism is subtle, so are the privileges the dominant group reaps from such oppressive acts of subtlety. Thus, it could be that subtle acts of racists practices were, in fact, occurring around Mr. Seas and he, based on theories of Whiteness (McIntosh, 1988), did not detect, or notice.

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McIntosh argues that white privilege is most times oblivious to those who enjoy its rewards. She (1988) describes White privilege as:

> an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks.

Dr. Jeffrey first conveyed awareness that skin complexion in the Black community, a product of racism, as having had some impact on his success. Dr. Jeffrey first made a direct reference to race having an impact on his success when he reported that he would not have gotten into the prestigious historically Black Howard University when the school was in the habit of implementing an alleged 'paper bag' test:

> *After I got to Howard, they would talk about, mention Howard and they would give me this image that you had to look a certain way to go to Howard. And all this kind of stuff. Can't remember a guy named, Larry??He was in my class in high school at Howard. He was so smarter than me and anybody else and he did well at Howard. Larry was fair skinned. And when I got to Howard in '71 I had a buddy I met there from D.C. a brown skin guy. Wasn't real fair, just brown skin. He told me, he says 10 years ago, you couldn't come here. Said what you mean, couldn't come here? Said you're too dark. He says we woulda sent you to Morgan. It was based on the color of my skin. I was just dark skin, I wouldn't have gone there. They wouldn't have let me in. Howard wouldn't have taken me. And I'd gone to, started doing a little bit of research, after I was there and he started telling me all this stuff. He told me, I'll prove it to you let's go up to the library. Whole library in the bottom of the library ah in what used to be the library they got all this stuff, yearbooks and stuff. If you saw some of those early yearbooks, up until the 60's you would have sworn that you were in some little white school. You know that's just the way it looked. Because Howard started to educate the children of, mulatto children who is created from the maids and the white politicians. Ahhh, the head master was a General Howard. That's how it got the name. Ah, he taught these kids, the mulatto kids, and they were the product of, produced by maids, black maids and white politicians.*

Graham (1999) confirms Dr. Jeffrey's claims that Howard University was once a school that catered to mostly lighter-skinned Blacks. In fact, Graham argued that Howard is known to many, in hushed voices, as the 'black version of Harvard or Yale'

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(p. 68), and that the "university wanted only the most accomplished intellectuals on its faculty and sought out students from the most ambitious and well-to-do-families." (p. 68) Graham also confirmed Dr. Jeffrey's assertions noting that the first Black president of Howard University was a "light-skinned black who could easily pass for white" (p. 69).

Dr. Jeffrey expressed issues again associated with race in his depiction of the affluent Black group, the Boule'. "And ah fair skinned folks they stayed together. Because ah, it's still a little clique here. I call it the Bluebloods. Yeah, the blue bloods [laughs]." He also referred to racial issues in his interesting recollection of a fellow physician who 'passed for white'

> *Yeah, he was on the lighter side. He's light side. And he's kind of funny. Yeah Fred, Fred was just a regular kind of guy. He was just, the old man he would just tell you the way it was. Yeah he 'cause you had some folks that were passing. There was a doctor; I can't remember the man's name. They were fair skinned too. But this guy was a psychiatrist. And he worked at the prison system some place around town. His name was Johnson. Johnson . . . I met a few times. And he told me about Johnson How he would always pretend to be white. If he went to the store, everybody thought he was white. And ahh one day he called him out. They were in some hardware store or some place at the same time. And he started asking questions and talking all loud. And he started shh, shhh, shhh . . .*

In her studies of complexion consciousness within the Black community, Kerr (2005) found that distinctions and divisions gave preferences to Blacks of lighter skin as early as the days of slavery. While Kerr could not confirm whether, in some parts of America, paper bag tests were nothing more than folklore; however, she does confirm that a variety of 'complexions tests' were used by Whites to ensure that Blacks who were 'passing,' as in the case of the doctor Dr. Jeffrey mentioned above, were not able to take advantage of privileges afforded to Whites only. In some cases, Whites looked at Black individuals' fingernails and hair to determine those who may be passing. And, in some cases, Kerr found Whites who employed 'spotters':

From the 1920s until the 1940s, white establishments occasionally employed blacks to work as "spotters" who stood at the entrance of white establishments to keep blacks who appeared white from passing into "white only" public places. The spotters originated from the black communities, so it was presumed that they possessed of an instinctive ability to identify "their own" or, at the very least, they would recognize specific people from their communities (p. 278).

In a follow-up interview, Dr. Jeffrey revealed in more detail the impact his race and

gender had on his success:

> *I think the gender was positive as a Black male. I think it's positive. The fact that I am male that helped in a positive manner. You know . . . .ahhh . . . .to . . . .to succeed in both sides, speaking of race now, to succeed in both sides the White world the Black world . . . . ahh being Black may have been negative in some ways, was not quite given all the opportunities, was not made easy. It's been made difficult. And it's still been difficult to operate in society and be a Black. You've got to be right and you've got to work twice as hard to achieve the same level of success, hold the same position as the White guy. You've got to, you've got to be right. It's sad but, you've got to be right.*

Mr. Smith did not mention as many racial incidences, but Mr. Smith did briefly agree that

issues surrounding race had an impact on his life

> *Being from a rural area I knew race. Some race issues was there. But, it didn't hinder me from doing what I needed to do. As far as into education. At some point I think it did hurt. As of people of color not getting the same as of others. As of like, talking about colleges. Visiting colleges. Knowing about what take to get in college. I knew about it because of the fact that athletics. Not because . . . if I wasn't playing athletics. I just think some time. How would I have gotten to college? Didn't know about filling out applications for scholarships, grants. Didn't know about that. So you know, I just feel how I would have known if I wasn't told. Teachers didn't do it.*

Mrs. Evans reported that her race, but not her gender, had an impact on her success today.

> *I don't think my gender has. I really don't. And it might have but I don't see it as having played a role. Now my race, I'm sure it did. Because when I became an assistant principal I know they wanted an African American. Because the principal was Caucasian. But, I was the best African American for the job. So, there were times when I'm sure it did affect me getting positions.*

> When asked did she think her race or gender had any impact on her early years,

Mrs. Evans just attributed her elementary school with giving her a great educational start,

"I really don't. I don't. Definitely not elementary school because I looked like everybody else then".

Neither Mrs. Evans nor Mr. Smith reported the same light or dark skin complexion consciousness that Dr. Jeffrey observed. Mrs. Evans also reported that she did not recall experiencing gender discrimination in her academic nor professional career. Based on the literature of hooks (1995), White (1999) and Kim (2001), I suggest that Mrs. Evans experienced a form of gender bias when she stated that was advised by her mother that women do not major in math. hooks (1995) argues that until issues of gender discrimination impact a female directly, there is oftentimes little connection of how race and gender intersect. hooks asserts

> Like many professional women they may be concerned with challenging gender inequality primarily when it impedes their progress. Rarely do they link that concern to revolutionary feminism that seeks to transform society, that includes a radical critique of racism, capitalism, and imperialism as well as sexism (p.63)

Mrs. Evans explained that she did not regret majoring in education. In fact, she felt that if she was destined [referring to divine intervention of some sort] to major in math, then her majored would have changed eventually. Mrs. Evans silence on the intersection of race and gender in her life is similar to that of Mr. Seas' interpretation of race and gender in his life.

I conclude by returning to the social ecological frame and its derivative the life course paradigm. The life course paradigm, as mentioned in research questions one and two is relevant here as well, particularly with specific attention to theme four: human agency. Human agency, as conceptualized by Elder (1994) is mindful of the 'freedom' of choice in individual actions. Yet, from a social ecological approach I assert that human

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agency rubs up against social institutions. One does not work without inevitably

affecting the other (Ortner, 2006).

Miller (1978) argued that there is no definite way to know if participants' are self-

serving in the way they construct their success stories. Miller proposed:

> If we wish to demonstrate that individuals do distort causality for successful and failing performances in order to serve their private image, it will be necessary to supplement subjects' verbal reports of causal attributions with behavioral measures that might be expected to reflect more reliably the influence of differential causal perceptions. (p.1222)

Each participant affirmed the notion that definitions of success are ambiguous.

Dr. Jeffrey defined success by reaching a goal, Mrs. Evans related success to spiritual

growth and Mr. Seas and Mr. Smith found success to be defined by service to others.

Additionally, only two participants, Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans, categorized themselves

as successful.   All four participants' associated success with one's ability to possess,

utilize and execute inner resources, such as drive and determinism. Contrast, the

participant's attribution of their success to their inner resources seemingly represented

discursive strategies which made use of meritocratic notions of what one needs to

become successful. Lastly, the participant's differed in the interpretation of the ways in

which they felt issues of race and gender had an impact on their ability to become first-

generation college graduates.

Thus, I conclude that the participants meaning making of their success was based on a

myriad of yardsticks. Yet, common themes regarding morals, values and ethic are

evident in them all. In addition, while they recognize the influence of those who

supported and helped along the way, their telling does seem to involve an understandable,

and much deserved, pat on the back for themselves.

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CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

"The oppressed are expected to achieve self-salvation out of poverty/low-income living. Yet, the oppressed cannot save themselves. Salvation can be achieved only with others."
~Freire, 1968, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

As first-generation college graduates out of poverty, these participants told stories of resilience, stories of assistance offered by mentors, and stories in which the timing of policies and events shaped their educational journey. Their stories also included their beliefs about their own success, illuminating those factors that contributed to their achievements thus far. The study's findings remind us that context, as well as an awareness of the ways in which class, race, and gender work individually and within institutions, are of the utmost importance in considering how one is to escape generational poverty. In this chapter, I begin by providing a brief summary of the study's major findings. I also present my assessment of the study's implications for educational policy and practice, teacher education, and as well as mentor programs. Then I offer recommendations for future research, reflections on how I might bridge my research and teaching, and concluding thoughts.

Implications for Educational Policy Practices

Major findings in this study include the intersection of processes or mechanisms, which I perceived as supporting the participants' abilities to respond resiliently to

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adversity. I suggest that certain experiences for the participants, related to self-efficacy and esteem, served to develop or enhance the likelihood of resilient responses over time. Moreover, I interpreted the support and presence of natural mentors as influential in nurturing the participants' resilient responses. Natural mentors offered protective processes to the participants by sharing informational resources in regards to college; by extending access to their social networks; and by providing advice regarding, or offering alternatives, to maladaptive behaviors. In addition, the participants' responses to adversity were undeniably influenced by contextual factors related to race and gender, as well as the timing of socio-historical, political, and cultural factors or events. Furthermore, the participants varied in their definitions of success and their assessment of their own accomplishments. Moreover, I suggest that the participant's attribution of inner resources to explain success is influenced by the American Dream narrative and Protestant work ethic. Lastly I interpret the participants' narratives reflect their use of acclaiming discursive strategies to explain *how* they were able to become first-generation college graduates.

Since the early days of Horace Mann, many have espoused the belief, that poverty can be prevented through one's efforts to obtain an education (Mann, 1868). In this connection between poverty and education lie two main beliefs: one, that schools in the United States are based on a system of meritocracy (Sadovnik, 2007); and two, that the onus the individual to use school as a means to escape poverty. Tightly coupled with those beliefs is a common assumption that individual character traits such as talent, skills, intelligence are needed to achieves success (Bowles and Gintis, 2005; McNamee and Miller, 2009). However, research has found that intelligence is not a significant enough

variable to predict success (Gould, 1996; Bowles et al, 2005). Furthermore, neither talent

nor behavioral traits (e.g. "the right attitude" (p.31), a good moral character, a great

personality, integrity, etc.), nor 'working hard' are sufficient explanations regarding how

one attains success (McNamee et al, 2009). Indeed, given that inequality and

discrimination are ever present, many researches reject the notion that solely possessing

the aforementioned traits guarantee success (McName et al, 2009; Hochschild, 1989;

2001). Consequently, my analysis of the participants' experiences allow me to concur

with McNamee et al. assertion that:

> By themselves, these traits are not typically enough to make the difference. It is
> not innate capacity alone, or hard work alone, or the proper frame of mind alone
> that makes a difference. Rather, it is the combination of opportunity and these
> other factors that makes a difference. (p. 50)

Recognition of meritocracy as a myth. Ideological shifts are necessary to

acknowledge and understand that meritocracy is an ideal, rather than a reality. Educators

and policy makers either need to concede and address the fact that access to great schools

and lucrative careers require hard work for some students, but not all. Validation of this

perspective troubles bootstrapping ideologies and leaves little room for blaming children

of poverty for their circumstances. It is clear that poor, working, and middle class

children do not use the meritocracy or American Dream narrative for the same reasons or

in the same way as the wealthy. Children who grow in the poor, low income or middle-

class realm are socialized to believe in the meritocracy myth. Students are told that if

they work hard in school, they can achieve anything they wish in the world (Hochschild,

2001). Yet, children of the wealthy already possess a life of abundant resources for

living, some for the rest of their lives and they pass those resources on to future

generations. Thus, for the children of the wealthy schooling is not a means of actualizing

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the meritocratic myth or acquiring the American Dream. Rather, for the wealthy, schooling is more for the purpose of creating and maintaining economic, social and political rank, status and ties. Jamie Johnson's, (of the Johnson & Johnson empire) documentary, *Born Rich* (2003) is indicative of this. Johnson's documentary featured several descendants of the wealthy: Jamie Johnson, Josiah Hornblower (heir to Vanderbilt and Whitney fortune), Luke Weil (son of A. Lorne Weil of the gaming industry empire), and SI Newhouse IV (grandson of publications giant S.I. Newhouse). Each wealthy descendant, along with others, vividly recalled being told by parents that they will never have to work to make a living. In fact, Johnson, Hornblower, and Weil were told to *just do something productive* with their life. Consequently, the wealthy do not necessarily utilize schools as the great equalizer, nor as a means of attaining a career to support oneself.

I draw from McNamee et al.'s (2009) assertion that having friends in 'high places" (p. 86) has proven to provide one with access to useful information as it pertains to job opportunities. Furthermore, McNamee et al. argue "Individuals with higher socio-economic origins are more likely to access better social resources in social networks or to find contacts with better social standing" (p.86). I contend then that the wealthy and middle to upper class parents' economic capital has the ability to morph into social networks that contain pertinent information as it pertains to schools and schooling. Scholars have consistently found that parents of substantial economic capital are more privy to resources of information in regards to which schools or programs in their area are high-performing and which teachers are the best or preferred. They also have available time to support and supplement their child's learning, as well as offer exposure

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to different opportunities (Lareau 2003; 2000; Anyon, 1980; Bancroft, 2008; Roch, Marschall, Schenider, Teske, 1997; Ravitch, 2010; Brantlinger, 2003; Cookson and Persell, 1991; 1985).

If a system of meritocracy is based on the notion that, all things being equal, hard work, talent, and virtuosity will win out, allowing the best or the most deserving to succeed (McNamee and Miller, 2009; Krauze and Slomczynski, 1985), how, then, does one account for achievement gaps (Farkas, 2004; Yeager, Walton and Cohen, 2013), gender inequality in schools (Buchman and DiPrete, 2006; 2008) and racial income inequality (PEW, 2011)? From the testimonies of the wealthy young adults in *Born Rich*, combined with research on the inequality of social mobility (Bowles & Gintis, 2002; 2005; Corcoran, 1995; 2005; Corak, 2006; Cookson & Persell, 1991; Isaacs, Sawhill & Haskin, 2008) I conclude that subtle factors unrelated to 'merit' (McNamee et al, 2009) weigh heavily on attainment of success, thus making it clear that all things are not equal. As a result, parents with limited amounts of economic capital are not likely to come into close contact with other parents of immense capital. McNamee et al (2009) state that as a consequence of distinct differentiation in social networks:

> People in lower socio-economic status groups tend to be members of resource-poor networks that share a relatively restricted variety of information and influence. They tend to use local ties, strong ties [friends with whom they have a close relationship], and family and kin ties" (p.86).

Accordingly, useful information about schools and schooling maybe gained by the latter and not the former when these two groups of parents are not in the same networks. I also contend that policies that place the onus on parents and children in poverty to find and access useful information about school and schooling fail to recognize the unfair advantages that parents and children in wealthy and middle class

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social networks possess. Therefore, policy and practices need to account for the cumulative effect of years of inferior access to adequate schools and schooling for parents and their children. Policy makers should also consider the differences in style of schooling processes parents can offer based on their economic capital, as well as the quantity and quality of useful information in parents social networks as it pertains schools.

If advancement in school and society are truly based on non-merit factors, then two things are inherently clear. First, educational policymakers are negligent in making decisions based on the erroneous assumption that meritocracy is a reliable mechanism for advancement. Second, if policymakers continue to create policy based on meritocratic beliefs, then they will only seek to confirm the assertions of conflict theorists in education that, "schools function in the interest of the dominant groups in a society (Sadovnik, 2007, p.4). Lastly, inequality will persist and advancement for children in poverty will continue to stagnate if parents, children, and educators maintain the belief that schools and schooling operate in a meritocratic fashion.

Abolishing the notion of 'the culture of poverty'. I believe that the participants' stories make obvious that blaming children in poverty for their own situations, or believing that they are destined to repeat the cycle of their parents out of behavioral choices (Payne, 1998), belies the point that poverty is deeply entrenched in a myriad of social, historical, cultural, and political institutional practices that undoubtedly have an impact on the choices one makes (Books, 2004). I argue that there is a need for shifts in ideology about poverty. Obviously, such a change is not easy. Indeed, as Bell (1993) has shown, there is little reason to believe that one can legislate love, care, and

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concern. However, in order to enact possible change, conscious decision-making regarding who should be elected to policy positions must occur. In addition, elected policy makers need to direct their attention to leveling the playing field, not necessarily by redistribution of resources, but by finding, training, and disseminating highly-qualified and motivated educators who employ social justice teaching practices (Chubbuck, 2010). Hochschild (1989) supports these assertions stating that, "Helping the estranged poor requires attacking racial and gender discrimination and poverty and crime and lousy schools and anger, frustration, ignorance. No feature in our policymaking system prohibits such coordination, but conventional American political practice inhibits it" (p. 152).

Recognition of the connection between agency and institutional practices.
Books (2004) asserts that "human decisions [are] institutionalized in social and political practices" (p. 14). Each of the participants had to contend with policy challenges associated with financial and social constraints. The participants' educational advancement was further limited by their resource-poor networks. Middle and upper class parents are oftentimes more aware of and have more access to types of educational cultural capital. They have come from families familiar with what is expected when children begin school, what academic tracks are more advantageous, and how to make a college application standout (Lareau, 2003). Given their financial status, middle and upper-class parents also have more time and money to maneuver well within school policy. In addition, they oftentimes have remarkably more social capital on which to draw as their links to other parents increases their awareness of what their child needs to be successful, including what teachers, schools and programs are 'the best' or preferred

(Roch et al., 1997; Owens, 2010). Without knowledge of the cultural capital validated in schools, as well cultural capital that allows one to navigate around detrimental policies, such as those associated with educational tracking, all parents, not just those in poverty, will remain subject to a schooling process rife with other policies that will make their attempts futile.

Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans' educational narratives reflect their experiences with policies which dictated that they would attend segregated schools. Dr. Jeffrey reported that when he attended segregated schools, he experienced torn and used textbooks, as well as teachers who held low expectations for him. Given that Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans grew up in poverty, it is plausible that certain aspects of their schools and schooling were deemed inferior in comparison to White, middle class students in their same cohort. Thus, I contend that, in the face of inequality, and subject to school policies and practices associated with *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Brown & Harlan, 1896), Dr. Jeffrey and Mrs. Evans were essentially expected to find a way out of poverty while attending schools with inferior resources. When federal policy demanded that schools desegregate as result of/owing to the landmark case of *Brown v. Board* (1954), equality proponents were hopeful. However, policy changes associated with *Brown* that impacted Mrs. Evans did not equalize her chances to get out of poverty. Policies associated with desegregation could not account for subtle or covert, institutional and individual actions of racism, sexism, or classism.

Policy also dictated that Mr. Seas would follow high school graduation guidelines that required higher standards. Though Mr. Smith was not directly impacted by this policy and never experienced segregated schooling, I suggest that he was impacted by

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their ramifications. The dismantling of Black schools with the passage of *Brown* was not conducted under the guise of racial harmony in society (Walker, 1996). Consequently, not all educators had high academic expectations for their Black students. Therefore, Mr. Smith's reporting that he had to contend with the low expectations for him held by teachers, guidance counselors, and some community members thirty years after the passage of *Brown* is a realistic and understandable experience. Thus, while he went to school under policies that had long become accustomed to desegregation, he still had to respond to institutional practices which included classes that failed to prepare him well for college (Oakes, 1985; 2008).

Who gets to choose and what choices are available to parents of different socioeconomic backgrounds are important questions to consider when evaluating policies designed to ensure school equality and educational success. Educational policy may appear to open doors to better resources through practices such as providing children access to schools in better socio-economic areas, but the creator of such policies must be aware of the choices parents and their children must make to access those options. Further, a lack of awareness on the part of certain parents regarding how to make the best use of the resources available in education only serves to perpetuate social stratification so long as parents with higher socio-economic status and educational background seek out and reap more benefits for their children (Roch et al 1997). Even if educational policy makers decide to increase or raise standards, or extend access to better schools, the parents and children who will most often have the time and resources to adhere to such changes will continue to come from upper and middle class families. Conversely, parents

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of low-income status/poverty/working-class may not recognize their "rights" as parents and, as such, may not make many demands of schools/educators (Brantlinger, 2003).

Implications for Educators

Teacher education and in-service professional development. With the federal government calling for more and more accountability, Bomer, Dworin, May, and Semingson (2008) claim that schools in impoverished areas constantly seek professional development to improve test scores. Bomer et al. contend that many school districts have called on Ruby Payne's workshops to explain, and figure out how to overcome, the plight of "children in poverty." Bomer et al. (2008) assert that with the federal government focusing on improving test scores of children who are in poverty, more schools are in need of professional development. Many have called on Ruby Payne's workshops to explain the plight of the "disadvantaged". Bomer et al, however, contend that Payne's work has only served to create 'truth claims' or erroneous statements deemed as being the truth about people living in poverty. For instance, Payne truth claims include arguments that the poor know how to get guns, use a lot of duct tape, use the Laundromat and move from home to home often (Payne, 1998). Primarily, Bomer et al contend that Payne's arguments have no merit given she provides no empirical research to back her truth claims. According to Bomer et al

> Payne repeatedly selects elements of daily life that represent the lives of the poor as characterized by violence, depravity, and criminality. Payne's selective representations are negative stereotypes that essentialize poor people as immoral, violent, and socially deficient. These representations do not account for the majority of low-income people, who work hard, obey the law, and do not exhibit the behaviors and attitudes that Payne has described (p. 2510).

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Scholars criticized Payne's work (Brown & Carners, 2010; Gorski, 2006; Gorski, 2008a; Bomer et al., 2008) as they believe her approach is unsubstantiated and adopts a deficit perspective. Gorski (2008b) claims that Payne's work does nothing more than peddle paternalism and support conservative views of saving the poor and people of color by teaching them how to be 'civilized'. Bomer et al.(2008) contend that Payne's erroneous information belies what educators truly need to understand to educate and uplift children in poverty. Based on the finding in this study I agree that teachers must take a vastly different approach than blaming children in poverty for their circumstances and instead understand that children in poverty more than likely have others at home who believe in schools as the great equalizer. Instead it would behoove teachers to determine how best to use support in the homes of children living in poverty. Bomer et al support this line of thinking in their claim that:

> educators should have accurate, evidence-based pictures of what their students' lives are like, what competencies and understandings they might bring to school if school were ready to receive them, and what social and cultural contexts have a bearing upon the interactions that occur in classrooms. (p. 2500)

Validating other forms of capital. Educators' efforts to seek accurate information to effectively educate children in poverty should be two-fold. First, educators need to recognize the many institutional challenges faced by students living in poverty. Second, educators must abolish the notion of positioning middle class culture as the only valid in schools. While social and cultural capital for children in poverty may be limited, the participants' narratives clearly demonstrate that it is far from non-existent. Middle class parents often have extra time to support schooling, even before children officially enter the school system at the age of six. Teachers tend to favor parents who send their children to school with an educational advantage (Lareau, 2003; 2001). For

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instance, children who enter first grade already knowing how to spell their name, count to one hundred, or speak another language fluently may convey to the teacher that their parent 'really cares' about this particular child. Many times, the teacher may not recognize the ways in which that particular parent's socioeconomic status affords them the time and resources to supplement their child's education. It is imperative to understand this link. As research indicates, many educators fail to see the link between class and schooling processes or argue that it is unimportant (Lareau, 2000; Brantlinger, 2003).

When teachers perceive students as having a deficit, teachers' expectations decline and subsequently the quality of the students' education deteriorates (Rhem, 1999; Rist, 1970; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Bomer et al. assert that, "As a consequence of low teacher expectations, poor students are more likely to be in lower tracks or lower ability groups, and their educational experience is more often dominated by rote drill and practice" (p. 2524). I add to this argument that, for teachers who perceive a student as having an educational deficit, they tend to assume that the child's parents do as well. Yet, it is clear in the case of all four participants that their parents supported their education. It can be argued that their parents' limited educational backgrounds and long working hours prevented them from supplementing their child's education personally. Moreover, while the participants' parents were not completely aware of how to maneuver within schooling processes on behalf of their child, the participants still garnered access to useful information (i.e., information about the college application process) through their natural mentors. If educators look close enough in the communities where children living in poverty reside, they may discover valuable networks and other forms of social

capital instead of deficits. They may find households that value education and community resources (e.g. neighborhood churches and organizations) that support students by offering scholarships, mentoring and tutoring, as well as long-standing or brief natural mentors in barber and beauty shops, next door neighbors, and extended family. Lastly, I suggest that in order to make effective change, educators will need to begin with the assumption that supports, or cultural surpluses, in the lives of children living in poverty do exist.

Individual agency myth. All participants voiced a belief that inner resources strongly contributed to their ability to attain their first generation college status. In their narratives, they pointed to determinism, being driven, and desiring more for their lives, as contributing factors in their efforts to escape poverty. I believe that their assertions reflect the individuality/ bootstrapping/meritocracy narrative as attributing to their first-generation college status. Yet, research indicates that their expressions of individual merit are examples of their response to adversity, not the processes that allowed them to continue to respond in such a way.

Rutter (1987) argues that we need to focus on protective mechanisms and processes, instead of individual acts, when looking at how people are able to be resilient in the face of adversity. He asserts, "That we need to ask why and how some individuals manage to maintain high self-esteem and self-efficacy in spite of facing the same adversities that lead other people to give up and lose hope" (p. 317). In short, teachers need to understand that instead of requesting children in poverty to simply work harder or display some form of resilience, it is imperative to recognize that acts of resilience are not innate. Instead, behaviors and attitudes that reflect resilience are a manifestation of

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support and nurturing by others who show genuine care and concern. Lastly, children and parents in poverty who display behaviors and attitudes that reflect resistance to traditional schooling practices (Willis, 1977) are not the result of a 'culture of poverty', but rather as a result of the realization that meritocracy is a myth and the educational the system has yet to fully make good on; its promise to be the great equalizer[33].

Appreciation of context. An important implication that emerged from the participant's narratives involved educating for critical awareness as. Castagano (2009) argues that:

> educating for critical awareness emphasizes increased understanding of power, privilege, and oppression within and between groups. Students should learn to question the status quo and current social relations of power and to recognize racism, sexism, homophobia, and oppression in all its various forms. (p.46)

In this way educators and students work together to deconstruct hegemonic notions of race, class, sex, and culture. As Alexander-Smith (2004) and Delpit (2006) argue, schools can empower children by teaching them how to think critically and develop a critical consciousness about privilege and power. I recognize that ideological shifts by educators, which include understanding how and why one remains in poverty, are not easy or swift. Delpit (2006), Chubbuck (2010), DiAngelo and Sensoy (2010), Bohn (2006) and McIntosh (1988) all attest that systematic shifts or changes in ideological beliefs do not happen swiftly and, in fact, can take decades.

Regardless, changes in ideological beliefs oftentimes precede systemic shifts. Thus, both changes in ideological beliefs and systemic shifts are indeed needed in order to provide true and sustaining change in education for children in poverty. However, to

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[33] It is also noted that, in regards to education for African Americans, meritocracy may be seen as a myth given that fifty nine years after *Brown v. Board* schools have equalized educational opportunities.

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make true and sustaining change educators need to understand the importance of context. Factors that contribute to the historical development of power and privilege for certain groups need to be de-mystified. Educators need to be aware of history, not just in terms of dates, people and places, but also in terms of concepts, themes, or societal issues that still show up today in our everyday cultural interactions; and seep in schools around the nation.

Implications for Mentor Programs

Support systems for children in poverty. The participants' narratives clearly demonstrate that there are sources of untapped capital in the neighborhoods, communities, churches, and families of children in poverty. Educators need to be aware that, despite the fact that a child lives in poverty, they more than likely have access to at least one an aunt, uncle, cousin, or longtime family friend in their community who is knowledgeable about such things as validated middle-class cultural capital and its relationship to the schooling processes. Furthermore, an educator may not be aware that such a person may already serve as a mentor. This is important as mentors with middle class knowledge may serve to offer exposure to new opportunities, provide information to the child's parent about 'the best' schools and teachers or about college access and success, or be a resource of information about rules and rituals that pertain to validated middle-class cultural capital.

Dr. Jeffrey and Mr. Seas' narratives clearly demonstrated the benefits of long-term, caring natural mentors. Bohn (2006) asserts that effective support for children in poverty requires much effort on the part of other individuals in society, not just the student. Accordingly Bohn states that assisting children in poverty:

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takes hard work and unwavering dedication. It takes committed teachers and administrators willing to set high expectations and offer engaging curricula that make strong personal connections for their students. It takes schools where students are not just prepared to take and pass standardized tests, but where they are taught how to place a conscious, active role in society, how to recognize and combat racism and other institutionalized inequities, and how to work in pursuit of the dream of social and global justice. (p. 15)

Erickson et al. (2009) point out that relationships with natural mentors spring forth as a result of arbitrary factors which may include the mentee being perceived as personable, gregarious, intelligent, and good looking. Furthermore, Erickson et al found that "A young person who faces all these disadvantages (social background, parental resources, peer resources, school resources, personal resources) has only a 44 percent likelihood of having a mentor, while an advantaged youth has an 82 percent chance" (p. 356). Thus, if children in poverty's best chance to find a mentor are left to arbitrary factors to secure effective help from natural mentors, then the chances of finding a mentor will continue to be slim.

Lastly, I believe that the findings in this study clearly indicate that there is much to learn about the ways in which natural mentors can influence or impact the lives of children living in poverty. As demonstrated in this study traditional views of mentors as those who have influence through set/scheduled meetings with children are challenged. The participant's relationship or interaction with brief mentors suggests that respected and caring adults, who have a consistent presence in the lives of a child, have the potential to have a positive influence. More specifically, natural mentors for the participant offered positive influence by providing meaningful mentorship moments though their encouragement and support, in addition to their roles as institutional agents. All of which I perceive to aid in fostering resilient responses. Consequently, I suggest

that educators would be remiss in underestimating the possibility that natural mentors may be found in beauty and barbershops and/or the neighborhoods, churches or schools of children living in poverty.

Implications for Future Research

This dissertation study provided a means for elucidating the stories of four adults' educational journeys out of poverty to become first generation college graduates. Through their stories, I obtained fascinating perspectives on the notion of resilience and what it takes to 'make it'. However, future research into these experiences and perspectives may allow for a better understanding of the ways in which the intersection of organizational practices within institutions (Meyer & Rowan, 2006), context, and the timing of lives shape the trajectory of the lives of children in poverty. Thus research conducted with a critical focus on the practices of institutions and individuals may undergird the fact that escaping poverty is currently dependent on the culmination of meaningful and arbitrary factors. Briefly, I offer a few suggestions for future research.

One possibility for future research may be an exploration of the ways in which a changing context impacts children in poverty. For example, the experiences of children in poverty five or ten years from now will not be directly shaped by the current economic crisis or segregation policies from the past. While remnants of economic and political events will have a long-lasting impact, the ways in which they affect one cohort will be different from another. Engaging in research focused on context validates Leonard (2004) and Kincheloe's (2000) claim that socio-historical, economic, and political landscapes undoubtedly shape institutional and individual experiences. Thus future studies that detail explorations of various context-specific landscapes will shed light on

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how assistance needed in escaping poverty extend beyond the classroom and school in general. Studies that place priority in acknowledging context, particularly as it changes, will contribute to the understanding of how and when opportunities for advancement appear in the lives of children in poverty. For example, are opportunities always presented through a person taking initiative, or are opportunities more likely to arise as a result of a changing context, happenstance, or what McNamee and Miller (2009) refer to as "lottery luck"[34] (p. 158) ?

Future research should also examine the untapped resources in the communities of children of poverty. Instead of school personnel, policy makers, and politicians employing theories that blame people in poverty, solutions are found more accurately by examining the ways in which financial, cultural, and social capital are validated, utilized, and distributed within the communities of children of poverty. I recognize that adopting ideological perspectives that children in poverty do indeed possess capital is less about policy change than it is about systematic shifts away from a functionalist or positivist view. The belief that validated capital looks a certain way- for example that only those with a two car garage, masters of Standard English and in possession of at least one degree only have cultural capital - is a perspective digested by many. Thus research in education that can pinpoint access to social, cultural, and economic capital outside of normative views may assist in educators and policy makers in making a paradigmatic shift in thinking about how one is to escape generational poverty.

Another possible approach of future research is the study of 'outliers,' people who have made it out of poverty. Instead of assuming a meritocracy narrative, research

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[34] According to McNamee and Miller (2009) "lottery luck can mean the fulfillment of the "rags to riches" American Dream. It is a nonmerit form of rapid mobility, but mobility nonetheless" (p.158-9).

should focus on factors outside of one's proclamation that through hard work they were able to never give up, persevere, and essentially find their own way out of poverty. Accepting resilient responses as a complete explanation of how and why a person was able to make it out of poverty leaves invisible the host of other factors which contribute to their success. Studies with such a research agenda may be helpful in creating a new narrative surrounding how to make it out of poverty. Lastly, findings from such research may also be instrumental in making clear that relying on individual acts alone as a way to end poverty is not sufficient to overpower the connection between oppressive institutional practices and social arrangements which serve to perpetuate disparities in society.

I believe that these four participants' journey out of poverty were informed and influenced by their specific cultural landscape, shaped by the socio-historical and political context relevant to their lives, and ultimately the choices and options that were presented to them. Scholars have called on educational policy makers, teacher education programs, and school districts to concede that lack of access to educational resources, social, and cultural capital can create a series of subtle and overt blockades to getting out of poverty (Kozol, 2005; Books, 2004). Thus educational policy makers, sociologists of education, and teacher educators would benefit from future research that examines the ways in which certain social, political, and economic blockades, be they subtle or overt may, be lifted.

Reflections on Developing My Research Agenda

Upon beginning my career in the academy, I intend to look more into the lives of the outliers of generational poverty. I am interested in how people, particularly of

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different time periods, overcame poverty to reach middle class status.[35] I would also like to examine further the ways in which poverty and race intersects with other social constructions such as gender and sex identification. Researching poverty as it intersects with a random intersection of institutional and individual factors will allow me to further compare what themes may be common in the lives of those who escape poverty and, in addition, how other themes manifest or vary.

In addition, I am intrigued by the master narratives found in education. Just as I found a master narrative of hard work and utilization of inner resources is embedded in the telling of the participant's stories in regards to poverty in this study, I posit that master narratives in education are also evident in other ways. For example, master narratives, as they pertain to such issues as free and reduced lunch, are being reproduced on teachers' websites. Comment threads on these sites reveal postings that reflect a perception that parents in poverty misuse and manipulate the subsidized lunch program. Further research into how master narratives may impact educator's motives and beliefs about education can help to illuminate the subtle ways that classism, racism, and sexism show up in schools, and thus how educators unknowingly perpetuate stereotypes. Moreover, research centered on educational master narratives may also demonstrate to educators how the master narratives they reify prohibit delivery an education steeped in social justice methods and beliefs.

Bridging my research and teaching. My experiences with teaching thus far have led me to conclude that the many White, middle class female and male (and

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[35] When I began this study I defined middle class based on income (PEW, 2012). However, future consideration of how to define middle class status will draw from Martin and Spencer's (2008) notion that attainment of middle class status may be based on one's ability to increase or accumulate social and cultural capital to the extent that one is able to convert their new forms of social and cultural capital into influential social networks or financial advancement.

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sometimes African American) teachers on the cusp of entering the profession have had none or very little introduction to notions of institutions much less the social constructions that reside within. I have seen more often than not where thinking critically about issues of class, gender, and especially race are indeed foreign, not attempted; or uncomfortably practiced. Most pre-service teachers I have taught have little understanding of context, let alone how it can and should be used to create engaging, culturally relevant, and rigorous lessons. Therefore, I am constantly seeking research to jumpstart critical thinking skills and to initiate awareness of cultural issues in schools.

Consequently, I see this study's contribution to my teaching as one that constantly challenges me to delve deeper into research as a means to explain educational outcomes in response to my students' claims about poverty, race, or gender that have no grounds or are strictly opinion-based. While conducting this study and simultaneously teaching, I became keenly aware that the research used to explain meritocracy as a myth is oft met with resistance. My students' thought-processes are succinctly in line with research that denotes many Americans still believe in the American Dream and the notion of meritocracy. For example, many of my students attested that students at Ivy League schools such as Princeton, Harvard, and Yale had to be smarter than they were. Moreover, they wholeheartedly believed that nothing other than their skills, talents, and intelligence got them into USC, as it did for students in the Ivy League schools. Factors such as social, cultural, and financial capital were insignificant to them in determining educational outcomes of themselves or others. Thus, the narratives elicited from the participants in this study help illuminate the interconnectedness of institutional and

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individual factors which contribute not only to the success of children in poverty, but society in general.

Concluding Thoughts

There is no magic bullet to end poverty and inequity in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Guy-Sheftall, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2003); which leads me to believe, in the same vein as Hochschild (2001), that in regards to the implementation of certain institutional and individual practices to garner a path out of poverty, "the devil is in the details" (p.37). How do children from living in poverty make it out of their circumstances? Resilience is a factor, and there is no doubt that determination must be a constant mantra. Scholars have discussed that, even in the most dire of circumstances, aspirations can stay afloat with the support of the scripted myth of the American dream (Macleod, 2009), and miraculously some students beat the odds and are able to make their way out of poverty. I contend that when children of poverty, who are oftentimes first-generation college graduates, make it to middle-class status, often the notion that "someone else did it, why can't you?" is proclaimed. This attitude can sometimes lead to some first-generation college graduates to attribute their beating of the odds to the familiar *pulling themselves up by their bootstraps* mantra (Hochschild, 1989). In reality, it is imperative to understand that there have been many other social and cultural factors plotted along their path which ultimately helped lead to their termination of a life in poverty (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Gladwell, 2008). Educators, policy makers, and politicians must consider that, in addition to economics, many other social and cultural factors should be recognized, and at the same time, educators must be aware that cultural and social resources that do not mirror middle-class values should not be overlooked.

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Scholars have documented many schools that have experienced success when their personnel recognize and believe their students' cultures and capital have value (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009). In such schools, personnel employ culturally-relevant pedagogy, which encompasses applying a theory of cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995), wherein teachers validate a student's culture, leaving the student with a sense of integrity. In these schools, personnel also believe that most parents, regardless of social class, race, or ethnicity want their children to succeed (Cookson & Persell, 1991; Lugaila, 2000). Oftentimes, parents living in poverty are not able to participate in schooling in the same way that middle-class parents participate (Lareau, 2000, 2003), and schools need to adjust for this difference. If one were to validate cultural capital outside of middle class standards, then cultural surpluses or forms of protective factors, processes, and supports may be more visible to people working to assist children escape from poverty (Delpit, 2012). Within students, their households, and their communities, capital is available (Lugaila, 2000), and when it is located and used, students' lives may be changed. Finally, a deficit framework for viewing people who live in poverty needs to be eradicated, and full awareness of the impact of structural issues related to social class, race, and ethnicity need to be employed in order to adequately aid children's escape from generational poverty.

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APPENDIX A

After reading back over initial interview Mr. Smith written account of factors deemed most important in determining his 'making it'
My parents – they had structure in the family, giving me structure to help me move forward in life

Mr. Herbert Foster (head coach when he served as assistant coach and later offensive coordinator at a high school) |

After listening to initial I interview Dr. Jeffrey written account of factors deemed most important in determining his 'making it'
Mr. Dean Father – didn't want to be like him Uncle Cousins (and their friends older than them) –drove new, nice cars and worked in a factory so they made 'good money' Teachers Friends Mrs. Dawn – 8th grade teacher Cousin (Larry who lived in New York) – made him go back to school

APPENDIX C

After listening to initial I interview Mrs. Evans written account of factors

deemed most important in determining her 'making it'

My dads' help with academic when I was 5 years old

Daily lessons from my dad

Third grade teacher used me in the many different ways to help me with shyness

Teachers didn't give us a chance to be unsuccessful

Had to do what my dad wanted – making sure I was successful

Things that were required by my teachers

Watching my mom work so hard and making few dollars

Mom wanted us to go to college

Sheila Miles guidance counselor helping me get scholarship

Seeing how other people lived with college degrees

School was successful because "we" cared

My education and a supportive husband are also reasons why I continued to be successful

Because I don't sugar-coat life; people must earn everything

Emulated my dad when working with my own personal child

Made sure "my" Rashad was successful because people saw my husband wasn't a college graduate – Rashad has been successful – MIT – Oracle – Computer engineer

Drive in me that makes me do my very best

Phases of success

Completing high school, college, good job, money, houses, cars, spiritual life

Success

Going from where I was years ago to where I am now

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APPENDIX D

After reading back over initial I interview Mr. Seas written account of factors deemed most important in determining his 'making it'

Mother
 	
Coach Bud Able
 	
Mentors throughout life
 	
      Colleagues
 	
      Supervisors
 	
      Principal
 	
      Superintendent
 	
Family
 	
College professor – Dr. Owen at USC Aiken
 	
Pastor – Richard Harrison

APPENDIX E

November 11, 1975. 84(25) Howard program spans curricula. Washington Afro-American(and the Washington Tribune), Red Edition

http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2243&dat=19751111&id=DpglAAAAIBAJ&sjid=JPUFAAAAIBAJ&pg=2528,2306053

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APPENDIX F

(Mr. Seas) South Carolina legislature amends rule that Triple E can be take a

maximum of three times.

S*0949(Rat #0449, Act #0413 of 1996) Joint Resolution, By Hayes

Similar(H 4453)

A Joint Resolution to permit certain students until December 1, 1996, the

opportunity to take the Education Entrance Exam (EEE) or certain sections

thereof not passed for a fourth time under specified conditions; to provide

for the manner in which students after December 1, 1996, who have failed to

achieve a passing score on all sections of the EEE after two attempts may

retake the examination for a third and fourth time, and to provide that before

a student may enter a teacher education program after December 1, 1996, he or

she must have passed the EEE.-amended title

 11/07/95 Senate Prefiled

 11/07/95 Senate Referred to Committee on Education

 01/09/96 Senate Introduced and read first time SJ-70

 01/09/96 Senate Referred to Committee on Education SJ-70

 02/08/96 Senate Committee report: Favorable Education SJ-10

02/13/96 Senate Read second time SJ-11

02/14/96 Senate Read third time and sent to House SJ-22

02/15/96 House Introduced and read first time HJ-10

02/15/96 House Referred to Committee on Education and Public

            Works HJ-10

04/18/96 House Committee report: Favorable Education and Public

            Works HJ-3

04/23/96 House Objection by Rep. Cotty HJ-67

04/24/96 House Objection by Rep. Walker, Wells, Lanford,

            Hallman, Allison, Fulmer, Tripp, Harrell,

            Limehouse, Whatley, Lee, Moody-Lawrence, Neal,

            Lloyd & J. Brown HJ-20

05/01/96 House Amended HJ-86

05/01/96 House Read second time HJ-95

05/01/96 House Roll call Yeas-51 Nays-40 HJ-95

05/02/96 House Read third time and returned to Senate with

            amendments HJ-40

05/09/96 Senate Non-concurrence in House amendment SJ-49

05/14/96 House House insists upon amendment and conference

committee appointed Reps. Jaskwhich, Gamble &

McMahand HJ-49

05/15/96 Senate Conference committee appointed Sens. Peeler,

Matthews, Hayes SJ-7

05/23/96 House Conference report received and adopted HJ-109

05/23/96 Senate Conference report received and adopted SJ-9

05/23/96 Senate Ordered enrolled for ratification SJ-9

05/30/96   Ratified R 449

06/06/96   Became law without Governor's signature

06/06/96   Effective date 06/06/96 except that the

provisions of Section 2 hereof expire on

December 1, 1996

06/27/96   Copies available

06/27/96   Act No. 413

_____

(A413, R449, S949)

A JOINT RESOLUTION TO PERMIT CERTAIN STUDENTS UNTIL DECEMBER 1, 1996, THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE EDUCATION ENTRANCE EXAMINATION (EEE) OR CERTAIN SECTIONS THEREOF NOT PASSED FOR A FOURTH TIME UNDER SPECIFIED CONDITIONS, TO PROVIDE FOR THE MANNER IN WHICH STUDENTS AFTER DECEMBER 1, 1996, WHO HAVE FAILED TO ACHIEVE A PASSING SCORE ON ALL SECTIONS OF THE EEE AFTER TWO ATTEMPTS MAY RETAKE THE EXAMINATION FOR A THIRD AND FOURTH TIME, AND TO PROVIDE THAT BEFORE A STUDENT MAY ENTER A TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM AFTER DECEMBER 1, 1996, HE OR SHE MUST HAVE PASSED THE EEE.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

Findings

SECTION 1. The General Assembly finds that:

(1) for the past two years a temporary budget proviso allowed students in the teacher preparation program who met certain requirements to undertake a fourth attempt to pass the Education Entrance Examination;

(2) when the General Assembly chose to end the authorization for the fourth opportunity to sit for the examination by deleting this budget proviso in the 1995-96 general appropriations act, some

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students, acting in good faith, were caught in the process of qualifying for the fourth attempt on the exam; and

(3) the General Assembly by this act is desirous of correcting this inequity.

Fourth attempt at EEE until December 1, 1996

SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a person required to take and pass the Education Entrance Examination (EEE), pursuant to Section 59-26-20(e) or 59-26-40 of the 1976 Code, who has failed to achieve a passing score on all sections after the number of attempts allowed by law may retake for a fourth time any test section not passed in the manner allowed by this section. The person must complete a remedial or developmental course from a post-secondary institution in the subject area of any test section not passed and must petition the State Superintendent of Education or the chairperson of the State Board of Education for authorization to retake that portion of the test failed. The State Superintendent of Education or the chairperson of the State Board of Education is authorized to grant the petition. The applicant must then pay a cost, not to exceed sixty dollars to be determined by the authorizing authority, for the administration of the fourth examination.

Subsequent attempts at EEE after December 1, 1996; required to enter teacher education program

SECTION 3. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, before a student may enter a teacher education program after December 1, 1996, he or she must have passed the Education Entrance Examination (EEE). After December 1, 1996, any person who has failed to achieve a passing score on all sections of the EEE after two attempts may retake for a third time any test section not

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passed in the manner allowed by this section. The person must first complete a remedial or developmental course from a post-secondary institution in the subject area of any test section not passed and provide satisfactory evidence of completion of this required remedial or developmental course to the State Superintendent of Education. A third administration of the examination may then be given to this person. If the person fails to pass the EEE after the third attempt, he or she after a period of three years may take the EEE or any sections not passed for a fourth time under the same terms and conditions provided by this section for persons desiring to take the EEE for a third time.

Time effective

SECTION 4. This joint resolution takes effect upon approval by the Governor, except that the provisions of Section 2 hereof expire on December 1, 1996.

Became law without the signature of the Governor -- 6/6/96.

APPENDIX G

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study: **Makin' it: A Study of First Generation College Graduates Life Out of Poverty** . This form details the purpose of this study, a description of the involvement required and your rights as a participant.

The purpose of this study is:

* To identify a common pattern or theme that allowed people from households of parents with no high school education and low-income-poverty to experience economic success/"Middle Class".

*
The benefits of the research will:

* Lend to the conversation on what is needed to end generational poverty. Essentially

    what is necessary to achieve the "American Dream" when a person grows up in dire

    circumstances.

The methods that will be used to meet this purpose include:

* Interviews

* document and historical demographic analysis

* Visits to community, family gatherings (if invited)

You are encouraged to ask questions or raise concerns at any time about the nature of the study or the methods I am using. Please contact me at 803-413-6433, 803-736-6988 or bensonsharla@hotmail.com.

Our discussion will be audio and/or videotaped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. If you feel uncomfortable with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study all information you provide (including tapes) will be destroyed and omitted.

Insights gathered by you and other participants will be confidential. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be

kept anonymous. Study records/data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and protected computer files. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

By signing below I acknowledge that I have I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study, although I have been told that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX H

	Dr. Jeffrey	Mrs. Evans	Mr. Seas	Mr. Smith
Racial Identity	African American	African American	White	African American
Gender Identity	Male	Female	Male	Male
Age	65	55	45	48
Occupation	Dentist	Assistant Superintendent	Athletic Director/Teacher & Town Mayor	High School principal
Place & Type of Origin	S.C. – rural county	S.C.– rural county	S.C.– rural county	Georgia– rural county
Graduated High School	1966	1975	1985	1982
Graduated College(undergrad)	1970	1979	1997	1988

Graduated College(grad)	1972	1982	2012	2005
Graduated College(post-grad)	1978			
Year of Significant policy/academic change	1975 Dental Program Curricula changes	1969 Alexander *v* Holmes	1983 – Nation at Risk 1996 – Joint Resolution to take Triple E	

APPENDIX I

Intersection of Resilience, Protective Processes, Changing Context and Timing in

Participants Lives Analysis Chart

	Factors that supported	Capital Trilogy	Resilient Narrative (morals, hard work, work ethic)	Timing (opportunity presented)
Dr. Jeffrey	Parent, grandparents and family believed in education; Natural mentor as protective and institutional agent	Given information about dental area curriculum span and shortage program (Appendix)	Driven, determined to 'make it'; inspired by parents struggle to achieve the opposite	Course registration cards; Recruitment for dental program

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Mr. Evans	Parents believed in education; guidance counselor as institutional agent; 'A' track; attended desegregated schools	Given information about scholarships and editing personal statement for application; Given information about job openings	'Made it honest', had inner drive; inspired by parents struggle to achieve the opposite	Attended desegregated schools until 6th grade;
Mr. Seas	Parents believed in education; Pastor as natural mentor; Coaches as institutional agent	Given information about independent coursework; First teaching position and apprenticeship for athletic director	Had work ethic, driven, determined; inspired by parents struggle to achieve the opposite	1996 amendment to Triple E test requirements

Mr. Smith	Parents believed in education; guidance counselor as institutional agent	Given information about college preparation from other athletes Given information about job opportunity in education after professional football injury	Mindset; 'Willpower of want to'	Job opportunity in education after professional football injury available

APPENDIX J

Rowesville Colored, Orangeburg County

Attended by Dr. Jeffrey in 1st grade

http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/schools/S112113000002669000/pages/S11211301746.htm

APPENDIX K

Rowesville, Orangeburg County

Attended by Whites where Dr. Jeffrey lived during school segregation

APPENDIX L

Dunton Colored, Orangeburg County

Attended by Dr. Jeffrey for elementary school

http://www.nationalregister.sc.gov/schools/S112113000002669000/pages/S11211301761.htm

APPENDIX M

Wilkinson High Colored, Orangeburg County

Attended by Dr. Jeffrey

APPENDIX N

Orangeburg High, Orangeburg County

Attended by Whites where Dr. Jeffrey lived during school segregation

APPENDIX O

APPENDIX P

McClenaghan High School

Florence, South Carolina – Desegregated high school attended by Mrs. Evans

http://www.theschoolfoundation.org/alumfriends/article156296c2199096.htm

APPENDIX Q
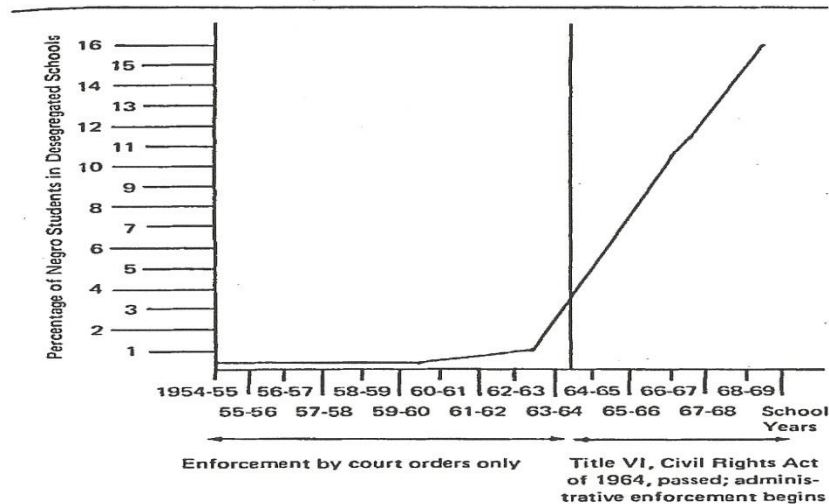
NOTE: The states involved are Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. Save for North Carolina and for Virginia, in none of these states did the percentage of Negro students attending desegregated schools, whether under court orders or administrative enforcement, ever exceed 16%.

SOURCE: United States Commission on Civil Rights, Federal Enforcement of School Desegregation. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1969, p. 36.

Figure 1: PERCENTAGE OF NEGRO STUDENTS ATTENDING DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS IN SEVEN SOUTHERN STATES

federal determination to achieve racial desegregation remained limited. Various weaknesses, some of which will now be delineated, flawed federal efforts.

ENFORCEMENT OF THE GUIDELINES

For years, Department of Health, Education and Welfare guidelines were not enforced rigorously because each admin-

Rodgers, H. & Bullock, C. (1972). School desegregation: A policy analysis. *Journal of Black Studies*, 2, 409-437.

Percentage of Negro Students in Desegregated Schools, p. 427

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APPENDIX R

TABLE 1

Progress in School Desegregation by Percentage of Black Pupils in Public Schools with Whites (1954-1967)

State	54-55	55-56	56-57	57-58	58-59	59-60	60-61	61-62	62-63	63-64	64-65	65-66	66-67
South													
Alabama	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.4	4.4
Arkansas	—	—	—	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.2	.3	.8	6.0	15.1
Florida	—	—	—	—	—	.3	—	.3	.7	1.5	2.7	9.8	22.3
Georgia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.1	.4	2.8	8.8
Louisiana	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.1	1.1	.9	3.4
Mississippi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.6	2.5
North Carolina	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.1	.3	.5	1.4	5.2	15.4
South Carolina	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.1	1.7	5.6
Tennessee	—	.1	.1	.1	.1	.1	.2	.8	1.1	2.7	5.4	16.3	28.6
Texas	—	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.3	2.3	5.5	7.8	17.4	44.9
Virginia	—	—	—	—	—	.1	.1	.2	.5	1.6	5.2	11.0	25.3
Border													
Delaware	1.9	11.0	28.5	36.2	43.7	44.1	45.0	53.7	55.9	56.5	62.2	83.3	100.0
Kentucky	—	.8	20.9	28.4	27.5	38.9	47.2	51.2	54.1	54.4	68.1	78.1	90.1
Maryland	5.1	13.9	19.1	22.1	32.4	29.3	33.6	41.5	45.1	41.8	50.9	55.6	65.3
Missouri	a	a	a	a	a	42.7	41.7	41.4	38.9	42.1	42.3	75.1	77.7
Oklahoma	—	a	8.7	18.2	21.2	26.0	24.0	25.6	23.6	28.0	31.7	38.3	50.8
West Virginia	4.3	a	a	38.7	39.8	50.0	66.6	62.0	61.4	58.2	63.4	79.9	93.4

SOURCE: Figures for years 1954-1967 compiled from various editions of Southern Education Reporting Service, Southern Schools News by Thomas R. Dye (ed.), American Public Policy: Documents and Essays (1969). Columbus Ohio: Charles E. Merrill: 18-19.

NOTE: These figures exaggerate progress achieved because only a few blacks attending a majority white school (or vice versa) hikes the figures significantly although many minority school persist. HEW's figures are more revealing since they indicate the percentage of black students attending 49.9% minority schools. No state figures are available after the 1966-1967 school year.

a. No data are available.

Rodgers, H. & Bullock, C. (1972). School desegregation: A policy analysis. *Journal of Black Studies*, 2, 409-437.

Progress in School Desegregation by Percentage of Black Pupils in Public Schools with Whites, p. 412.

APPENDIX S

Family and Friend Interviews

	Family	Friend/Teacher/Community Member
Dr. Jeffrey	Wife	Mrs. Harrison – Coaching teacher at Howard University
		Mr. Faison – Television repair shop owner/ Former employer
Mr. Evans		Mrs. Scott – Former 5th grade teacher
		Mr. James – Eighth grade math teacher
Mr. Seas		
Mr. Smith	Mother	

APPENDIX T

As cited in Snyder, T. D. (1993). *120 years of American education: A statistical portrait*

(Vol. 1). DIANE Publishing.

Figure 3.--Percent of persons 25 years old and over completing 4 years of high school, by sex and race: 1940 to 1991
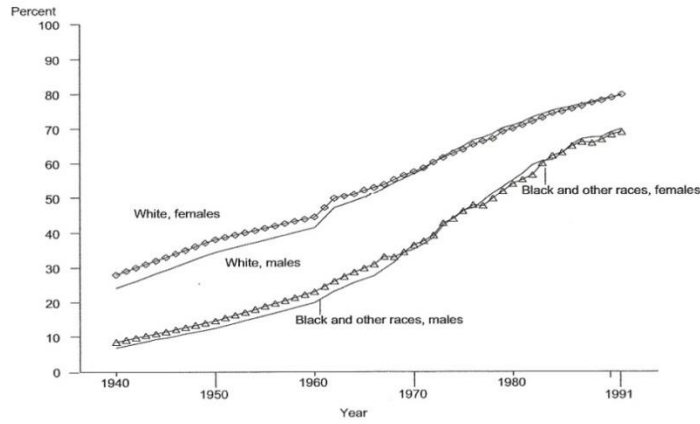
Figure 4.--Percent of persons 25 years old and over completing 4 years of college, by sex and race: 1940 to 1991
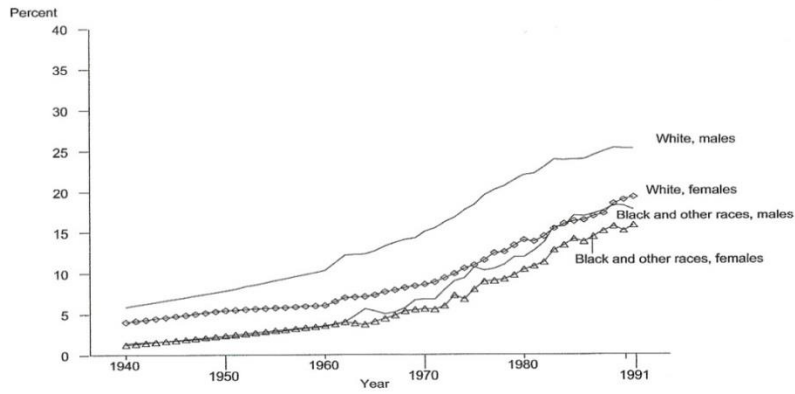
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APPENDIX U

Codebook

<u>Factors that posed barriers to getting out of poverty</u>

School, Teacher and Community Barriers: Experiences of low expectations or negative exposure.

Expressing a lack of knowledge about how to get to college, grants, financial aid, subsidizing standardized testing fees and scholarships.

Instances of feeling like an 'outsider' in the classroom during school desegregation.

Feeling ill-prepared by schools to perform well on standardized tests and/or in college.

Peers who did not perform well in school.

Placed in classes that had little to no academic rigor.

Parental Presence and Financial Support: Parents work schedules, or constraints in time, prevent them from establishing a relationship with teachers. As well limited schooling experiences that may have caused misunderstandings about schooling processes in grade school and beyond.

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Raised in single parent home.

Parents not having the time to enforce what's being taught at school.

Parents income based on working class salary.

Parents work hours require much time away from child and child to take on adult responsibilities.

Raised on single parent income.

Factors that supported participants in getting out of poverty

Parents Expectations: Conveyed the importance of school and/or a belief in the educational system as a means of advancement.

Parents contacting the school in reference to questions about course placement.

When parents emphasized the importance of receiving high school diploma.

Parents emphasized the importance of attending school.

When parents had time to support or add to school material at home.

If parents discussed college.

People: Held them to high expectations, exposed them to a different life, encouraged them to move forward and looked out for them by providing some sort of protection of pertinent information needed to move forward in school.

People who took an interest in participant life trajectory and remained in life over a long period of time.

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People in the community who constantly inquired about grades and schoolwork.

Teachers who held them to high expectations of achievement in the classroom.

Family members telling participant's they foresee them in a particular occupation.

People in the community who offered information about how to get into college.

People in their path who offered information about certain programs and encouragement to apply.

People who kept them busy during times when school was not in sessions.

Peers who offered information about what they learned in regards to what is needed to get accepted into college.

Events: Experiences or exposure to different opportunities by people in the community.

Observations of inspiration from people in the community who had gone to college, who lived in nice houses an dressed in nice clothes.

Experiences in church or school of explanations of certain validated middle class behaviors.

Visiting places that introduced a different way of life.

<u>Critical points that changed the trajectory of their lives</u>

Timing and Changing Context: Factors that proved to be the tipping point in influencing class trajectory for the better.

Agency used in such a way to break policy or procedure to enhance educational opportunities.

The random development of relationships that served to mentor and provide a support network.

Historically relevant events and policy changes that have an direct impact.

Advice obtained and utilized to enhance school and career opportunities.

 Use and accumulation of the capital trilogy

Cultural Capital: An awareness of codes or rules for participating and maneuvering within the institution of schools.

Knowledge of tracking and how to get out of the 'low-track'

When, where and how to address experiences of racism.

Need for or access to middle class behaviors associated with etiquette.

Observing the importance of preserving the community, community help, and leadership opportunities from family members.

Parents acknowledgement of certain validated middle class schooling behaviors.

Observing how to and the importance of setting goals, being organized and self-disciplined.

Instances of confronting or addressing authoritative figures about opportunities.

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Financial Capital: Access or lack thereof to monetary means outside of immediate family.

    Found solutions to overcome lack of access to loans or government programs.

    Needing to work while attending school to support oneself and/or family.

    Finding ways to pay for the cost of graduate school.

Social Capital: Access to pertinent information from people in their lives.

    People offered information to graduate school programs and job opportunities.

    People offered to write influential letters of recommendations to gain access to school programs.

    People offered invitations to professional and social organizations as a means of networking.

<u>Use of American Dream or Meritocracy narrative</u>

Determination: Anyone regardless of class, race or gender can become successful in America if they are determined to work hard and be resilient.

    Specific references of needing to be driven or determined in order to become successful.

    Specific references to being driven or determined as an attribution to overcoming challenge.

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Proclamations of needing to be proactive in seeking out information as a means of being able to achieve success.

Being inspired by watching parents struggle.

Specific references to needing to work hard to reach success.

Any mention of internal resources as a means of fueling success.

Middle class identity: Middle class narratives that involved proverb-like proclamations of what is needed to become successful.

Reference to use of use of morals, ethics and spirituality as a means to helping one attain success.

Belief in the need to earn what you achieve, because it will not be handed to you.

Expression of belief that one must work their way up to the 'top'.

Belief in onus of the individual to seek out and take advantage of opportunities.

APPENDIX V

Sample of data thematically separated then cut and pasted on poster boards for analysis.
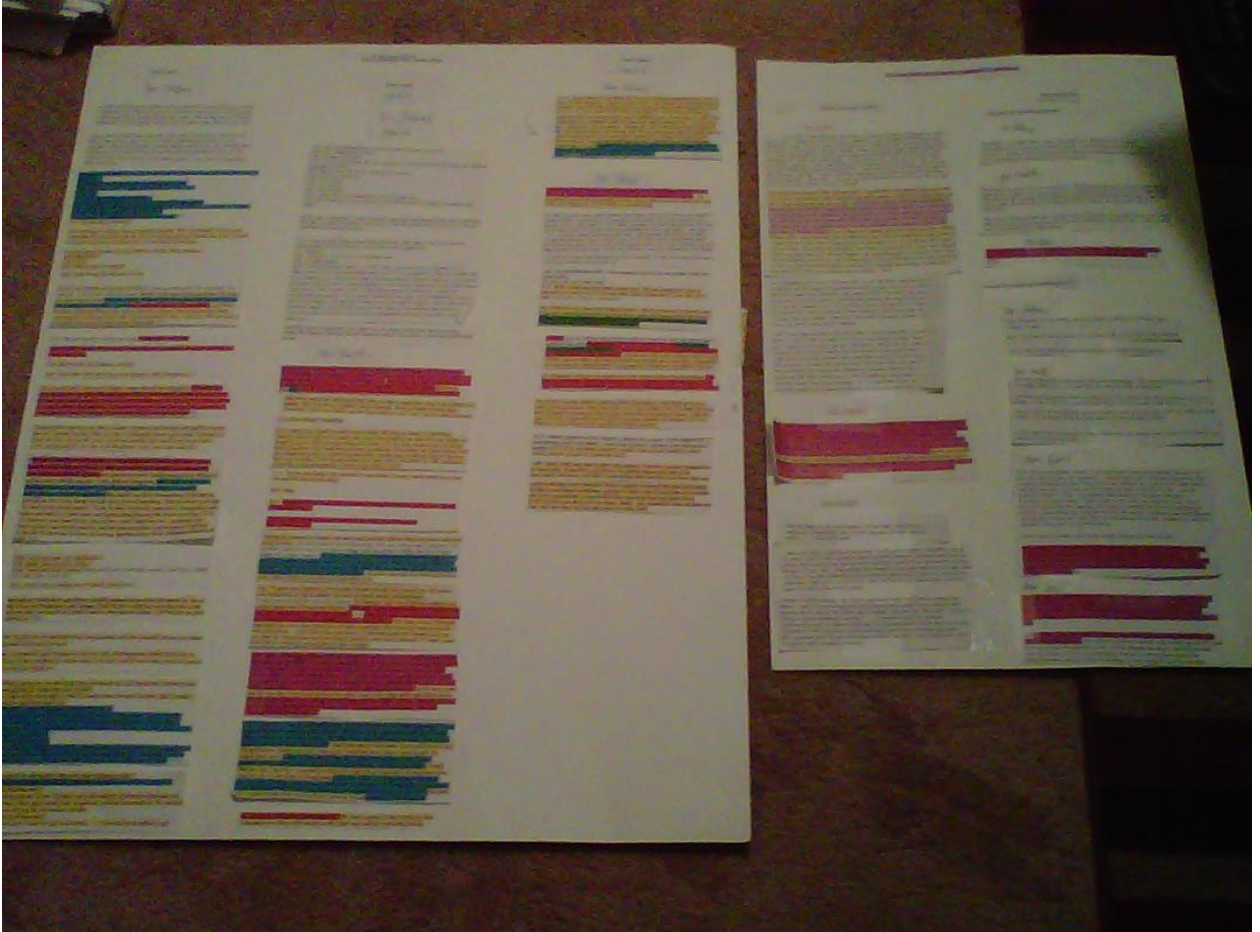
APPENDIX W

Key Terms in Study

1. Success - Success is defined in this study in two ways. First, the fact that it is so difficult, and almost statistically impossible, to end generational poverty speaks to one reason why the participants are classified as successful. Second, for the purposes of this study, the participants are also viewed as successful because, not only did they end generational poverty by means of securing a professional career, but they are also classified as successful due to their ability to pass wealth onto their offspring. Success from this perspective is viewed as pivotal as given studies that indicate people in poverty, as well as members of the Black middle class, have difficulty passing on wealth (Bowles & Gintis, 2002). To further exacerbate this problem a Pew Research report (2011), based on 2009 US Census, reports that White households have a median wealth 20 times that of Black households. Therefore, acquiring the ability to pass on wealth is deemed a success in that it is an example of 'beating the odds'. But it is also deemed a success because wealth has the potential to help the next generation (for example by way of creating a means to fare better in economic downturns or purchase land in "high quality neighborhoods and schools") (Hardaway et al, 2009; Corcoran & Matsudaira, 2004).

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2. Hegemony - I make use of Wells' (2009) definition of hegemony as "the process whereby a dominant group projects its way of seeing social reality so successfully that its views are accepted as the norm, as common sense, as the natural order, even by those who are in fact oppressed or disempowered by it."

3. Self-esteem and self-efficacy – Self-esteem and self-efficacy are defined in this study as one having the belief that they are intelligent, capable, proud of what one has been able to accomplish and decidedly that one can and will be able to accomplish more.

4. Default curriculum - A default rigorous curriculum refers to eradicating a system of tracking and instead implementing a curriculum that includes extending all students the same level of rigor

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