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K-12 Economically Disadvantaged Students, Poverty, and Education: Ecological Narratives of Successful Raised-In-Poverty, Texas Educators

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**K-12 ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS, POVERTY, AND
EDUCATION: ECOLOGICAL NARRATIVES OF SUCCESSFUL, RAISED-IN-
POVERTY, TEXAS EDUCATORS**

by

Rebecca Morris, B.S., M.Ed.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
(May 2021)

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EDUCATION: ECOLOGICAL NARRATIVES OF SUCCESSFUL, RAISED-IN-
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by

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ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to understand how successful Texas educators who grew up in poverty understood and improved the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students. This study utilized a structural ecological theory and three theories of social relationships (Social Identity, Standpoint, and Cultural Capital). This phenomenological and qualitative study used a cross-sectional, descriptive, online case study design rooted in narrative nonfiction. Virtual interviews with six successful Texas educators that grew up in poverty were conducted. A narrative method of analysis was utilized to generate codes then organize them into themes, and to construct and compare the narrative findings. The results of the study demonstrated that poverty has many adverse effects resulting in both out-of-school and in-school challenges for children. These challenges crossed 11 dimensions. This study reported coping mechanisms that were exhibited by the students and their stakeholders. Controlling themes across each participant's narrative were isolated and discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to begin by thanking my family for encouraging me throughout my pursuit of obtaining my terminal degree. I love you all very much and would have never made it this far without your love and support. My husband, Robert, and my children, Amanda, Jonathan, and Christopher were my much-needed encouragement along the way. I am also thankful for my beautiful grandchildren, Matilyn and Kaleb, for reminding me at times to stop studying and enjoy sweet snuggles with them.

A special thanks to Dr. Ali Hachem, my chair. Thank you so much for patiently leading me through this process. I am positive that this would have been impossible without the encouragement and guidance you provided. Thank you to my entire committee, Dr. Avant, Dr. Jenlink, and Dr. Uriegas, for your guidance. Cohort 21, thanks for the laughs and encouragement throughout these last few years.

I want to thank the many teachers I had throughout my educational experience that reminded me often that I could do whatever I put my mind to. You inspired me to become an educator and pass that message on to my students.

Last, I want to thank the educators who shared their stories in this dissertation. Your words are powerful and will hopefully help many children in years to come.

DEDICATION

To my kids and grandkids, I hope you always pursue your dreams.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the following: The background of the problem, the research problem, purpose, questions, and significance. The study's assumptions, limitation, and delimitations are also discussed. The chapter ends with the definitions of important terms.

Background of the Problem

This section will discuss the problem of poverty in the United States and Texas.

Economically Disadvantaged Children in the United States and Texas

Childhood poverty has been a perpetual problem in the United States, with one in five children considered to live below the poverty level and one in two considered poor or near-poor (Dreyer et al., 2016). Controversy, as well as strong emotions and questions, surround the definition of poverty (Engle & Black, 2008; Jensen, 2009; Milner, 2013). Poverty was defined in economic terms based on income and poverty line or as a broader social disadvantage linked to exclusion factors such as age, gender, race, and ethnicity (Engle & Black, 2008). An absolute or relative approach was another way to consider poverty. An absolute poverty approach measured the amount of food, type of shelter, and other basic material needs of a person. A relative poverty approach considered income

inequality, such as living below the federal poverty level and was the more quantitative way to measure poverty (Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

The federal government decided on a standard definition of poverty in 1964 (Hymowitz, 2017). The poverty rate “measure[d] the share of people with family incomes below a dollar amount called a poverty threshold, which was scaled according to family size and the ages of the members” and examined the “number or share of people facing economic deprivation, and gauge[d] the level of that deprivation” (Dalaker, 2019, p. 3). Poverty has been “an official measure defined by the U.S. Government based on family income” and equated to a little more than \$24,000 annually for a family of four with two children (Lee et al., 2016, p. 17; The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), 2018a).

The poverty level based on income, equated to “less than three times the value of a hypothetical basic food basket” (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 3). Poverty thresholds “vary according to the size of a family and the ages of its members” (Poverty USA, 2019, p. 1). The poverty rate was also considered a “lagging indicator” since it changed after other changes in the economy, such as a recession, change in job demand, change in pay raises, and a difference in average hours worked (Dalaker, 2019, p. 3). Families considered low-income made less than twice the federal poverty threshold (NCCP, 2018a).

The poverty line was a basis for determining eligibility for government programs such as housing, funding, and insurance (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). These government programs were a form of welfare reform that began in 1996 and resulted in poverty declining to an all-time low of 16% in 1999 (Hymowitz, 2017). Many critics felt the

official poverty rate was inaccurate due to its exclusion of “in-kind benefits and tax credits” such as “nutritional assistance, subsidized housing, home energy assistance, and tax credits” (Short, 2016, p. S46; Wilson & Schieder, 2018, p. 1). These critics felt the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) was a more accurate measure of poverty because it accounted for in-kind benefits and tax credits missed in the official poverty rate (Wilson & Schieder, 2018) and therefore inhibited the ability to “gauge the effect of government programs on the alleviation of poverty” (Short, 2016, p. S46). The downside to using the SPM was the lack of historically consistent data. SPM data only existed from 2009 forward (Wimer et al., 2016).

Children in Poverty. Children were considered “overrepresented among our nation’s poor” (Koball & Jiang, 2018, p. 1), yet the economic security of our nation depends on “the well-being of our children” (Baldari, 2018, p. 1). “Young children [had] the highest poverty rates, both historically and today” (Wimer, et al., 2016, p. S60). Nineteen percent of those living in poverty were children (Koball & Jiang, 2018) living on a little more than \$24,000 annually as a family of four (NCCP, 2018a). Over 40% of the children in the nation were low income (Koball & Jiang, 2018, p. 1) living in a family of four with an annual income of less than \$50,000 a year (Baldari, 2018). This equated to approximately 1 in 5 children living below the federal poverty level and 1 in 2 who were poor or near-poor (Dreyer et al., 2016). Of this 19% of children living in poverty, African-American (34%), American Indian (35%), and Hispanic (28%) children represented the greatest percentages. Twelve percent of children in poverty were white or Asian (Koball & Jiang, 2018).

“Children [were] 62% more likely to experience poverty than adults” and made-up “22.7 percent of the U.S. population but account[ed] for 32.3 percent” of those living in or near poverty (Baldari, 2018, p. 1). In 2017, the child poverty numbers were a little more than four million for White (4,026,000) and Hispanic (4,639,000) children and slightly less than three million (2,889,000) for black children (Children’s Defense Fund, 2018). Nearly 8% of children (6 million children) lived in extreme poverty in 2017, equating to a household income of just over \$12,000 a year (Baldari, 2018). This equated to 5,864,000 children under the age of 18. When broken down by race, 5% (1,869,000) of children in extreme poverty were white, 15.3% (1,537,000) were black, 10.5% (1,945,000) were Hispanic, 4.9% (201,000) were Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 16.4% (103,000) were American Indian/Alaska Native (Children’s Defense Fund, 2018). Approximately “2.5 million children experience[d] homelessness in a year” (Poverty USA, 2019).

Children under the age of 5 had our highest poverty rates. In 2017, nearly one in five infants, toddlers, and preschoolers were poor, which equates to 3,865,000, and nearly half of the children in poverty under five (46.3%) were considered living in extreme poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2018). “Nearly one in six American Indian/Alaska Native children, more than one in seven black children, and one in ten Hispanic children were living in extreme poverty, compared with one in twenty white children” in 2017 (Children’s Defense Fund, 2018, p. 3).

Children in Poverty by Age and Race/Ethnicity. When considering percentages, black children had the highest percentage of poverty. Still, when looking at numbers,

Hispanic and white children were the highest, both exceeding four million children considered poor (Children's Defense Fund, 2018). Hispanics accounted for more than one-third of America's poor children (Hymowitz, 2017).

In 2017, 12,808,000 children under the age of 18 lived in poverty and survived on or below \$486 a week as a family of four (Children's Defense Fund, 2018). Of this number, 10.9% were white, 28.7% were black, 25% were Hispanic, 12.2% were Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 31.1% were American Indian/Alaska Native.

The child poverty rate in the United States surpassed that of many other industrialized nations such as Finland, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands (Moore et al., 2009). "Despite being one of the most developed countries in the world, the United States [had] one of the highest rates of childhood poverty globally" (Child Fund International, 2013).

Poverty and Immigrant Children. "As of 1990, immigrant kids had poverty rates 50 percent higher than their native counterparts" (Hymowitz, 2017, p.4). In 2000, "more than one-fifth of immigrant children were classified as poor, and today, "31.1 percent of the poor under 18 were either immigrants or the American-born kids of immigrant parents" (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 4).

Children in Texas in Poverty. In the United States, "states in the south and southwest continue[d] to have higher rates of child poverty than the rest of the country" (Baldari, 2018, p. 2). Texas had a population of 7,003,545 children and 24% (1,659,988) lived in poor families (NCCP, 2018b). Though Texas did not rank among the top 10

southern states in the United States to have high poverty rates, Texas showed greater percentage of children living in poverty (24%) and low income (48%) than the national average (19% and 40% respectively). This equated to 1 in 4 children living in poverty in the state of Texas (Lee et al., 2016, p. 17). Hispanic children (32%) and Black children (32%) were three times more likely to live in poverty than White (10%) or Asian (10%) children (NCCP, 2018b). Texas borders three of the states that ranked the highest in poverty: Louisiana, New Mexico, and Arkansas (Baldari, 2018).

Texas was comprised of 254 counties. In the year 2000, 186 of those counties had more than 20% of the children living in poverty. By 2012, 205 counties had more than 20% of the children living in poverty (American Federation of Teachers, 2014). By 2014, Texas as a whole had 24.6% of children under 18 living in poverty (American Federation of Teachers, 2014) and 26% of children under six living in poverty (NCCP, 2018b).

Immigrant Children in Texas. In the United States, “31.1 percent of the poor under 18 [were] either immigrants or the American-born kids of immigrant parents” (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 4). Texas had similar results. Thirty-two percent of children in Texas-born of immigrant parents lived in poor families as opposed to 19% of children in Texas from native-born parents living in poor families (NCCP, 2018b).

Demographics of Poor Children in Texas. “A child’s chances of thriving depend[ed] not only on individual, family, and community characteristics but also on the state in which he or she [was] born and raised” (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018, p. 20). Texas consistently ranked in the bottom ten states for overall child well-being. The data for classifying overall child well-being developed from four domains: (a) economic

well-being, (b) education, (c) health, and (d) family and community (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). In Texas, the poverty rate was higher for children living with a single parent (58%) (NCCP, 2018b). The poverty rate was even higher for single-mother children (38%) than single-father ones (19%) (Tingle et al., 2018). Children living in poverty were less likely to live in a home with at least one parent working a full-time, year-round job (only 38% compared to 86% of non-poor children) (NCCP, 2018b).

Fifty-four percent of poor children lived with parents that did not have a high school diploma (NCCP, 2018b). The mobility rate of poor children in Texas was 6% higher than for non-poor children (NCCP, 2018b). In addition, over 65% of children living in poverty in Texas were not proficient in reading and math (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). Over two million children in Texas received the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and over three million enrolled in Medicaid and the Child's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (Spotlight on Poverty, 2020). Another sixty thousand were receiving Texas Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and child care subsidies (Spotlight on Poverty, 2020). Since more than 10% of children in the United States lived in Texas, it was essential to understand and support the needs of these children and expand their opportunities (Tingle et al., 2018).

Data on Economically Disadvantaged Public-School Students

In the United States, “the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch [was] used as a proxy measure for the percentage of students living in poverty” (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015, p. 1). Eligibility was calculated by multiplying the current year's federal income poverty guidelines by 1.30 for free meals and by 1.85 for

reduced meals (Lipps, 2019, p. 10296). If the family income was at or below that amount, then they qualified for the program.

In the United States, over half (26,113, 604) of the 50 million public school students were on FRPL (Snyder et al., 2019). When compared from the 2000-2001 school year (38.3%) and the 2016-2017 school year (52.3%), there was a 14% increase in the percentage of students eligible for FRPL (Snyder et al., 2019). Only ten states in the United States had less than 40% receiving free or reduced-price lunches, and the average is 52.3% (Snyder et al., 2019).

Low-poverty schools had 25% or fewer students eligible for FRPL, and those with more than 75% eligible for FRPL were considered high-poverty schools (NCES, 2019b). In the fall of 2016, a more significant percentage of students were in high poverty schools than low poverty schools. In the Fifty states and the District of Columbia, 24% attended high poverty schools, and 21% attended low poverty schools (NCES, 2019b). The highest percentage (28%) were in mid-low poverty schools, where 25-50% were eligible for FRPL and mid-high poverty schools (26%), where 50-75% were eligible for FRPL (NCES, 2019b).

Economically disadvantaged public-school students by race and location.

When considered by race, students attending high poverty schools were Hispanic (45%), black (44%), American Indian/Alaska Native (38%), Pacific Islander (24%), two or more races (17%), Asian (14%), and White (8%) (NCES, 2019b). Percentages of students by race varied between high poverty and low poverty schools. In low poverty schools, the

students were 39% Asian, 31% white, 24% two or more races, 12% Pacific Islander, 8% Hispanic, 8% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 7% black (NCES, 2019b).

Attendance of high poverty schools differed by school location: 40% of students in cities, 18% in the suburbs, 20% in towns, and 15% in rural areas (NCES, 2019b). In contrast, the attendance of low-poverty schools by location were 13% of students in cities, 32% in the suburbs, 9% in towns, and 18% in rural areas (NCES, 2019b).

Economically disadvantaged public-school students in Texas. In Texas, the total enrollment in public schools increased over 14.4% from 2008 (4,749,571) to 2019 (5,431,910) (TEA, 2019c). Economically disadvantaged students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program, or other public assistance (TEA, 2017b). In Texas, the number of students identified as economically disadvantaged grew by 22.5% between 2008 and 2019, a growth higher than the increase in student population (14.4%) in the same period of time (TEA, 2019c). In 2018-19, 60.6% of students were considered economically disadvantaged, an increase from 56.6% in 2008-09 (TEA, 2019c). Texas, along with California and Florida, had a higher percentage on free and reduced lunch than the United States as a whole. In 2016, the national average was 52.1%, and that of Texas was 58.9%. Florida's was 58.8%, and California's was 58.9% (TEA, 2019c, p. 59).

Education Service Centers and Charter Schools in Texas. There were 20 total Education Service Centers in Texas. In 19 of the 20 corresponding education regions, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students rose from 2008-2019. In the 2018-2019 school year, 19 regions, served populations with at least 50% of students identified

as economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2019c). A rise from only 17 regions in the 2008-2009 school year. The lowest percentage was 48.3% (Austin), and the highest was 85.5% (Edinburg) (TEA, 2019c). Edinburg (84.8%) had the highest percentage of economically disadvantaged students during the 2008-2009 school year, but Fort Worth had the lowest percentage (42.7%) (TEA, 2019c).

Open-enrollment charter schools made up only 5.8% of the Texas public school population, yet 69.9% of the students at open-enrollment charter schools identified as economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2019c).

ED students in Texas by race/ethnicity and location. Across the five largest racial/ethnic groups, the racial/ethnic breakdown of total enrollment in Texas public schools was: Hispanic (52.6%), white (27.4%), African American (12.6%), Asian (4.5%), and multiracial (2.4%) (TEA, 2019c). During the 2018-19 school year, the racial/ethnic breakdown of economically disadvantaged students in the top five largest racial/ethnic groups in Texas were Hispanic (76.3%), African American (74%), multiracial (45.5%), White (30.7%), and Asian (29.3%) (TEA, 2019c). Hispanic students were not only the largest percentage of students in Texas public schools (52.6%), but they were also the largest percentage of economically disadvantaged students in Texas public schools (76.3%) (TEA, 2019c). The percentage of economically disadvantaged students increased 2-3% for all racial/ethnic groups from the previous year (TEA, 2019c). Hispanic (45%) and black (44%) students were also the largest percentage of students in the nation to be considered economically disadvantaged (NCES, 2019b).

In Texas, the percentage of students attending schools differed by location: major cities (41.5%), suburban areas (32.3%), towns (9.8%), and rural areas (16.4%) (Glander, 2017). Economically disadvantaged students in Texas also differed by school location: 71% in major urban areas, 51% in major suburban areas, 66% in independent towns, and 15% in rural areas (TEA, 2017a). The United States showed similar results, with the largest percentage of economically disadvantaged students being in major cities (40%) and the smallest in rural areas (15%) (NCES, 2019b).

Immigrant students were between the age of three and twenty-one years old, had not “been attending school in the United States for more than three full academic years, and were not born in any state in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the District of Columbia” (TEA, 2019c, p. 22). TEA (2019c) also identified a migrant student as one who was between three and twenty-one years old, had a parent or guardian that was a migratory agricultural worker, and in the preceding 36 months had moved from one school district to another for a parent or guardian to obtain such employment (p. 22). In the 2018-19 school year, 60.6% of all students in Texas were economically disadvantaged. Yet, they made up 98.3% of those identified as migrants, 97% homeless, 89.5% in foster care, 85.6% ELs, 84.3% in bilingual/ESL programs, 75.9% at-risk, 74.9% in Title 1 programs, 67.1% immigrants, and 67% special education (TEA, 2019c).

Federal and State Policy on High-Quality Education for all Students

When it came to child well-being, equity should be a goal for all of us (Lee et al., 2016, p. 34). Poverty was an ongoing and serious problem in the United States, and it continued to be at the forefront of concerns for K-12 education policy and practice, in

hopes of improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). “Policy” working to ensure a fair and equal opportunity began as early as 1868 with the introduction of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause (U. S. Const. amend. XIV). The Equal Protection Clause “laid the groundwork for the federal government’s most crucial responsibility in K-12 education: the protection of civil rights” (Harris et al., 2016, p. 2).

At an educational policy level, demanding high-quality education for all students began with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (PL 89-10) under President Lyndon Baines Johnson, and as part of his War on Poverty campaign. This law changed the federal government’s role in education (Hornbeck, 2017) by providing funds that helped low-income students. This law resulted in the initiation of title I and bilingual education policies (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2018).

Related milestones included training more than 30,000 special education teachers and specialists, captioned films, education for children with disabilities in preschools and state-operated schools, dropout prevention projects, and technical assistance in rural areas (U. S. Department of Education, 2010). Title I policies also addressed educational inequalities that continued to exist after the implementation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (PL 88-352). Title I, a product of ESEA, required “that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education” and that these children were able to reach proficiency on State achievement standards and assessments (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

The “life cycle of educational ideas and ideals [were] integral to an understanding of educational policy and practice in a particular society at any given time” (O’Neill, 2016, p. 1). ESEA was an excellent example of this life cycle of educational ideals with its numerous reauthorizations in the last 50 years. The reauthorization most known for elevating the federal government’s role being No Child Left Behind (Jennings, 2018). In 2001, President George W. Bush signed into law No Child Left Behind, or NCLB. This law reauthorized ESEA. NCLB mandated high stakes testing, held schools accountable, and imposed sanctions on schools without adequate yearly progress (NCLB, PL 107-110). NCLB increased tested grade levels from three to seven and set a near-impossible goal of 100 percent proficiency (Harris et al., 2016). With NCLB, the federal government played a more significant and aggressive role in school accountability (Jennings, 2018), a role that previously was more about support than pressure (Harris et al., 2016).

In 2015, President Barak Obama signed Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, into law, and this was “the most recent incarnation of ESEA” (Harris, 2015, p. 545). This act replaced NCLB, and it gave individual states more control over judging the quality of a school (ESSA, PL 114-95). ESSA “sharply reduced the federal government's role, especially in the design of school accountability systems” (Harris et al., 2016, p. 1). ESSA increased the states’ authority over measuring student progress, intervention in the lowest-performing schools, and evaluation of teachers and principals (Jennings, 2018).

“The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people” (U. S. Const. amend. X). Therefore, the decision to leave the power to “create schools and a system of

education in the hands of individual states” continued its historical constitutional roots (Hornbeck, 2017, p. 2). As early as the 1800s, Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, led the common school movement which purpose was “a free, universal, non-sectarian, and public institution” (Warder, 2015). Massachusetts led the country to “require compulsory education” all over the United States (Hornbeck, 2017, p. 2). By 1930, all states were legally required to have a free and compulsory education (Hornbeck, 2017, p. 2).

As early as the first half of the nineteenth century, Texas began focusing on educational policy when it addressed the Mexican government’s failure “to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources” and determined “that unless a people [were] educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self-government” (Texas Declaration of Independence, 1836). By 1949, the Gilmer-Aikin laws created the Foundation School Program which purpose was to apportion state funds to local school districts and to elect a Texas State Board of Education (TEA, 2007). In 1984, Texas House Bill 72 allocated more money to poor school districts and required standards-based reform to improve the academic achievement of all students (Achieve, 2009, p. 16; H.B. 72, 1984). A rewrite of the Texas Education Code in 1995 adopted a mission that required that “all Texas children have access to a quality education that enable[d] them to achieve their potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities of our state and nation” (Texas Education Code, 1995).

ESSA allowed states to be responsible for their own accountability procedures while requiring states to submit their state's educational plans for approval. The plan included results of standardized tests in reading, math, and science; English Language Learner (ELL) proficiency (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2016); one other academic measure such as academic growth based from reading/language arts or math standardized assessment results; and at least one other nonacademic measure such as school climate or student engagement (U. S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 19). The plan stipulated measures must be calculated the same for all schools across the state, and all data must also be disaggregated into the following subgroups (a) economically disadvantaged, (b) major racial and ethnic group, (c) children with disabilities, and (d) English learners (U. S. Department of Education, 2017). Texas House Bill 22 passed in 2017 during the 85th Regular Texas Legislature Assembly, and it required the commissioner of education to:

Measure and evaluate school district and campuses concerning: (1) improving student preparedness for success in (A) subsequent grade levels, and (B) entering the workforce, the military, or postsecondary education; (2) reducing, with the goal of eliminating, student academic differentials among students from different racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds; and (3) informing parents and the community regarding campus and district performance (TEC, 2017).

The three domains of Texas's new A-F accountability ranking, to meet the requirements of ESSA, included student achievement, student progress, and closing the gaps (TEC, 2017).

Although so much policy was directed toward serving *all* children, the academic success of underprivileged children throughout the United States and in Texas remained a problem. Policymakers often used evidence from assessments to address educational issues and problems. Once policymakers could see where disparities existed, they could work to increase student performance (Wiseman, 2010, p. 7). A criticism of evidence-based policymaking was that it often “focuse[d] only on what work[ed] in specific situations or with unique communities” (Wiseman, 2010, p. 2).

Standards-Based Accountability Reform in K-12 Education

This section discusses federal, state, and local accountability reform.

Federal Accountability. Federal, state, and local governments all played a part in reinforcing standards-based accountability in schools. The federal role placed emphasis on civil rights: fair and equal opportunity for all students (U. S. Const. amend. XIV). The state established standards for accountability (ESSA, PL 114-95, 2015). The local school districts directly impacted student learning and school improvement by following state and federal guidelines (House Bill 22, 85th Leg., 2017). “Raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress were central strategies for promoting educational excellence and equity in our Nation’s schools” (U. S. Department of Education, 2019, p. 1). The institution of accountability systems occurred to “ensure that *all* students [emphasis

added]- regardless of their race, family income, home language, or disability status- [got] the education they need[ed] and deserve[d]” (The Education Trust, 2020, p. 1).

By 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* defended the idea that separate but equal schools were not in fact equal at all (National Archives, 2016). This Supreme Court action paved the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (PL 88-352), which began driving equity in education. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the many amendments and reauthorizations after its initial passing began to push educational equality (ACT, 2020) for bilingual students (Bilingual Education Act, 1968), handicapped students (Education for all Handicapped Children, 1975 which later became Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1991), students with disabilities (Individualized Education Plans and least-restrictive environment, 1975), and students with educational gaps (Improving America’s Schools Act, 1994 & No Child Left Behind, 2001).

The most recent reauthorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), which required all states to prepare and publish an annual report card with state-, district-, and campus-level accountability data (TEA, 2019d). Under ESEA, States were to “establish challenging standards, develop aligned assessments, and build accountability systems for districts and schools based on educational results” (U. S. Department of Education, 2019, p. 1). Also stated were explicit requirements to ensure that students served under Title I had the same opportunity to achieve high standards as all other students in each state (U. S. Department of Education, 2019, p. 1). Every three years, states used both academic and nonacademic

accountability measures to identify the lowest-performing five percent of all schools in the state, the schools with one or more subgroups underperforming, and the schools with graduation rates below 67 %. These schools were considered “in need of improvement” (U. S. Department of Education, 2017, p. 24).

State Accountability. At a state level, an educational accountability system embodied the policies and practices used to measure and raise achievement while eliciting support where and when needed (The Education Trust, 2020). ESSA reduced the federal government’s role in supervising such accountability systems and placed that responsibility back on the individual states (Harris et al., 2016). ESSA increased the state's authority over measuring student progress, intervening in lowest-performing schools, and evaluating teachers and principals (Jennings, 2018).

State accountability systems created a method of rating schools and districts, such as stars or A-F grades, and then determined actions needed including rewards, recognition, resources, or interventions (The Education Trust, 2020).

In 1993, the Texas Legislature mandated a public-school accountability system in the state. Two primary goals of this accountability system were to (a) improve student achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics and to (b) close achievement gaps (TEA, 2019e). Texas’s timeline of accountability systems was:

- 1994-2002- Single State Accountability System and no Federal Accountability System
- 2003-2011 – Separate State and Federal Accountability Systems
- 2012 – Transition to a unified accountability system

- 2013-present – Implementation of a united State and Federal Accountability System (TEA, 2019e, p. 92).

The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) utilized student scores in schools' ratings during the 2012-2013 school year. House Bill 22 passed by the 85th legislature (2017) implemented three domains for accountability: (a) Student Achievement, (b) School Progress, and (c) Closing the Gaps (TEA, 2019g, p. 129). The Student Achievement domain evaluated (a) STAAR assessments for all students, (b) college, career, and military readiness indicators, and (c) graduation rates.

The School Progress domain used STAAR results to analyze student growth of at least one year academically. It compared student achievement to other districts' or campuses' of "similar economically disadvantaged percentages" (TEA, 2019g, p. 129). The Closing the Gap domain disaggregated data from STAAR by the following subgroups: (a) economically disadvantaged, (b) major racial and ethnic groups, (c) children with disabilities, and (d) English learners.

The indicators in the Closing the Gap domain "align[ed] the state accountability system with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act" (TEA, 2019g, p. 129). Based on data from the three domains, districts were assigned an A-F rating and campuses received a rating of "Met Standard, Met Alternative Standard, or Improvement Required, or Not Rated" (TEA, 2019g, p. 134). Campuses rated Improvement Required engaged in one or more intervention activities specified under the Texas Education Code (TEC, Chapter. 39).

Local Accountability. House Bill 22 (85th Texas Leg., 2017) established the Local Accountability System or (LAS). LAS required measuring student outcomes, or areas directly related to student outcomes, that were not in the state accountability system (TEA, 2019f).

Local Accountability plans [could] vary by school type (elementary school, middle school, high school, and K-12) and by school group (magnet schools and early college high schools), but must apply equally to all campuses as applicable by school type and group (TEA, 2019f, p. 1).

Once TEA approved a LAS, it remained for at least three to five years (TEA, 2019f, p. 1).

“The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), require[d] each state education agency to prepare and publish an annual report card with state-, district-, and campus-level data” (TEA, 2019d). All local educational agencies that received Title I, Part A funding were required to distribute “the state-, district-, and campus-level report cards to each of its campuses, the parents of all enrolled students, and the general public” (TEA, 2019d). This distribution, at a minimum, could be a direct link posted on the campus website. Campuses with a rating of A, B, or C could combine local and state accountability ratings, but the state rating must weigh at least 50%. If a campus had a D or F rating under the state accountability system, then local ratings could not be combined with state ratings (TEA, 2019f, p. 1).

Problem Statement

Although educational policy at the federal and state-level demanded a fair and equal opportunity for high-quality education for all students, and although improving academic achievement was a central focus on the high-stakes standards-based accountability movement, the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students in public schools continued to suffer.

Purpose Statement

This research study aims to understand how educators who grew up in poverty understood and improve the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

- (1) How do successful educators who grew up in poverty understand the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?
- (2) How do successful educators who grew up in poverty improve the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?
- (3) What were the childhood experiences of successful educators who grew up in poverty? What cultural and social obstacles did they face? How were such obstacles negotiated?

- (4) What were the K-12 educational experiences of successful educators that grew up in poverty? What obstacles did they face in school? How were such obstacles negotiated?
- (5) Why do successful educators who grew up in poverty decide to pursue an education degree and career?

Significance of the Research

With today's high stakes testing, school ratings, and the complex factors that include college or career readiness, understanding how to help children succeed in school was of utmost importance. Many different factors impact student learning, some of which included "disparities in access to health care and affordable housing (Gorski, 2018, p. 10), student mobility and exposure to crime and drugs (Ullucci & Howard, 2015, p. 172), language barriers, teen moms, parents without a high school degree (Schmit et al., 2013, pp. 2-3). These risk factors could be a negative contributor to academic success. A better understanding of how students were able to succeed in school despite experiencing many at-risk factors could add promise to school interventions.

My study will take the perspective of educators' firsthand experience of living in poverty and succeeding out of poverty and how that has shaped their teaching. I hope they can shed light on the barrier's students face and ways to guide instruction and school structure to help students overcome those barriers.

Assumptions

In the process of completing this study it was assumed that all study participants qualified to participate in this study and were educators that grew up in poverty. It was

believed that all participants answered the interview questions honestly and openly. It was assumed that the interviewee fully understood the nature of the interview questions and answered them accordingly or asked for clarification otherwise.

Limitations

This study utilized narratives instead of numbers to analyze and focus on understanding human actions. Narratives could help us understand complex human concerns that could not be fully understood by numbers alone (Kim, 2016, pp. 4-5). Though this study hoped to contribute to the complex issues of poverty that student's experienced in school and in culture. As a researcher, I understood that my findings may not be transferable, but I hoped that the reader could "make decisions about its usefulness for other settings" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 85). This study told others' narratives and looked for common themes but did not offer a prescriptive plan of action. The hope was that the findings would be useful for districts to consider when preparing a plan of action and valuable for teacher preparation programs in preparing novice teachers for working with students of poverty.

This study hoped to have a diverse population of participants based on grade level taught, geography, ethnicity, and gender, but that was not guaranteed.

Another limitation was that the researcher also came into this study with certain biases. Bias was "the researcher's perspective" (Kim, 2016, p. 102) as well as the researcher's voice, identity, perspectives, assumptions, and sensitivities" that were key elements in the researcher's choice of research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 117). The researcher grew up in poverty and experienced some of the risk factors

mentioned in this study, as well as the success the participants experienced. She had a limited understanding of other's experiences growing up in poverty and now working with children subjected to poverty. The researcher wished to discover how other educators found success and investigated new factors that could lead to interventions that improved student success.

Delimitations

This study used Zoom to conduct virtual face-to-face interviews, which could provide a less personal interview process due to connection issues or greater distance between researcher and interviewee. Depending on the camera angle, all body language may not be evident to the researcher, which could be important for directing the researcher to ask more probing or guiding questions. This study included only educators who served in Texas. This study's results were unique to educators of Texas and therefore may not be useful to educators in other areas.

Definition of Terms

The purpose of defining the following conceptual terms was to set the foundation for the reader to understand the conceptual terms that would be used in this study.

Economically Disadvantaged

According to the Texas Education Agency (2019b), an economically disadvantaged student included those "reported as eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. ESSA replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB), enacted in 2002. NCLB shined light on where students were making progress and where they needed extra support. ESSA included provisions to ensure success for all students in college and career readiness (U. S. Department of Education, 2018).

Federal Poverty Threshold

\$24,339 for a family of four with two children (Lee et al., 2016).

Free/Reduced Lunch

According to federal guidelines, the eligibility for obtaining free/reduced lunch at any public school was outlined by the Food and Nutrition Service Agency, USDA. A child that was part of a family of four that earned \$32,600 or less qualified for free meals. A child that was part of a family of four that earned \$46,435 or less but more than the free lunch amount of \$32,600 qualified for reduced lunch (Lipps, 2019).

Generational Poverty

Generational poverty was defined as “long-term sustained poverty that spans generations” (Gorski, 2018, p. 8).

Low Income

The family income was “at or above 200% of federal poverty threshold” (Koball & Jiang, 2018, p. 2).

Poor

The family income was “below 100% of the federal poverty threshold” (Koball & Jiang, 2018, p. 2).

Poverty

Poverty was defined as “a chronic and debilitating condition that result[ed] from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affect[ed] the mind, body, and soul” (Jensen, 2009, p. 6).

Resilient

A resilient student was one that was academically successful in completing school (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Rural-Distant

Territory that was more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urban Cluster (NCES, 2019b).

Rural-Remote

Territory that was more than 25 miles from an Urbanized Area and also more than 10 miles from an Urban Cluster (NCES, 2019b).

Situational Poverty

Situational poverty might be more temporary or could become longer-term. Examples included a financial hardship from a health crisis or laid off from work (Gorski, 2018).

Structural View

A structural view according to Gorski (2018) included components of a resiliency view but emphasized societal barriers that impacted student engagement and performance.

Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.)

The “purpose of this title [was] to ensure that all children [had] a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Urban

Any incorporated place or census-designated place within a metropolitan area of a large city (NCES, 2019b).

Summary

There has been an overrepresentation of children in poverty and children not performing above the national standards in reading and math. Students in poverty often experience multiple risk factors that were linked to negative outcomes in school (Schmit et al, 2013, p. 2). Many myths led to negative outcomes of students in poverty (Gorski, 2016, Gorski, 2018, & Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Educators needed to look past the deficit ideology and consider the structure of the school and increase the expectations they placed on these students as well as build their hope factor (Jensen, 2009 & Duncan & Murnane, 2011). A narrative inquiry approach was used to seek the perspective and

experiences of teachers that grew up in poverty and determined what common internal and external factors led to their academic success in hope it would provide a path for educators and educator preparation programs to increase the success of over half our children.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one reviewed the background of the federal problem of academic achievement of students of poverty. The research questions were addressed and the significance of the study was stated. Many terms were defined to assist the reader in understanding the contextual use of the terms in this study. Chapter two will review related literature in relation to protective factors that contributed to academic success and non-protective factors that led to a decline in academic success for students of poverty. Chapter three will explore the narrative inquiry method this study will be utilizing. The participants will be outlined as well as procedures for obtaining their narratives.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter will provide a review of the existing literature about (a) challenges economically disadvantaged children face in culture and in school; (b) successful ways stakeholders can support economically disadvantaged students; and (c) successful ways economically disadvantaged stakeholders can support economically disadvantaged students. This chapter then discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study as well as the significance as it relates to the literature reviewed.

Challenges Economically Disadvantaged Children Face in Culture

Children subjected to poverty experienced challenges that led to effects or consequences in their lives. The culture of poverty was reported as partially mediated through environmental deprivations (Wood, 2003). A child's environment shaped and calibrated "the functioning of biological systems very early in life" (Johnson et al., 2013, p. 319). These challenges included (a) physical effects from the quality of food and nutritional intake to (b) social factors based on relationships with family and peers, as well as (c) structural factors that related to child care, parental work, and neighborhoods (Yoshikawa et al., 2012, p. 274). Similarly, children subjected to poverty experienced material deprivation, unsafe environments, diminished social-emotional well-being, and awareness of the stigma associated with poverty (Quint et al., 2018). These challenges

often led to physical, psychological, emotional, and social effects (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Comeau & Boyle, 2018; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Poverty had both direct and mediated effects on a child's mental, emotional, and behavioral health (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). "The negative consequences of poverty on a child's health and well-being [were] often lifelong" (Dreyer et al., 2016, p. S1) and could be a strong predictor of life expectancy (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). This early adversity could extend into adulthood and even into the next generation (Brent & Silverstein, 2013). Still, if intervention occurred early enough (Johnson et al., 2013), the impact could "be reversed or at least attenuated" (Brent & Silverstein, 2013, p. 1777). Some forms of intervention included employment, health insurance, or earlier foster care placement due to abuse or neglect (Brent & Silverstein, 2013).

Physical and Physiological Challenges

Health and safety were reported as a concern for children growing up in poverty. An effect at "one stage in a child's development [could] hinder development at a later stage" (Yoshikawa et al., 2012, p. 274). Health and safety outcomes were worse for children who experienced long-term poverty or poverty within their first three years of life (Moore et al., 2009). Childhood mortality rates were alarmingly higher for poor children than higher-income children (Pascoe et al., 2016). Children subjected to poverty encountered toxic stressors that increased their risk of many high-risk health diseases on into their adulthood (Johnson et al., 2013; Pascoe et al., 2016). Some of these included depression, cardiovascular disease, asthma, cancer (Johnson et al., 2013), hypertension, and chronic inflammation (Pascoe et al., 2016). These increased health challenges were

often due to “inadequate access to preventative, curative, and emergency care and were affected more frequently by poor nutrition, single-parent families, dysfunctional families, and poor housing” (Wood, 2003, p. 709).

Health Challenges. A child’s healthy immune system reportedly began before birth with the mother’s mental and psychosocial health (Johnson et al., 2013). Many conditions that resulted from poverty challenged the mental health of mothers. Challenges such as limited health care access, the struggles to clothe, feed, and house a family, and living in unsafe neighborhoods (McCurdy et al., 2012) were taxing to a mother’s mental health (Zalaquett & Chambers, 2017, p. 155). Such chronic stressors could impair the healthy development of children in poverty (America’s Health Rankings, 2019). Parents “overwhelmed with the pressures of poverty [were] unable to meet the emotional, cognitive, and caregiving needs of their children” (Engle & Black, 2008, p. 246).

There were numerous health challenges for children subjected to poverty due to home environment (Wood, 2003), community environment (Kim et al., 2018), available health care (Berchick & Mykyta, 2019), and nutrition intake (Stringer, 2016). Children subjected to poverty had a higher chance of health risks than nonpoor children (Wood, 2003).

Low-birth Weight, Infant Mortality, and Adolescent Pregnancy. A low-birthweight child was considered one weighing less than 5 pounds, 8 ounces at birth (America’s Health Rankings, 2019). Low birthweight could be an early indicator of child health (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Burd-Sharps et al., 2012; Pascoe et al., 2016).

Premature birth (born before 37 weeks gestation) was the most common cause of a low-birthweight baby (America's Health Rankings, 2019). Poor children had higher rates of low birth weight, which consequently led to other health and developmental problems (Dreyer et al., 2016). The duration of poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997), as well as duration in a low-income neighborhood (Collins et al., 2009), were also predictors of low-birthweight. Adverse birth outcomes were more prevalent in single mothers, parents with lower levels of education, and black mothers- all part of high-poverty groups (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Poverty status at birth was considered an indicator of the duration of poverty. One in six newborns were born poor, and half of those children continued to be poor for at least half their childhood (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). The rates were even higher for black children, with two out of five having been born poor and two out of three having been persistently poor (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). Low birth weight could be a health threat because it “correlate[d] to impairments in language acquisition and psychological and intellectual development” (Burd-Sharps et al., 2012, p. 167).

Another significant variation in the United States for low birthweight was place (Burd-Sharps et al., 2012, p. 167). A little over 8% of births in the United States were considered low birth weight (America's Health Rankings, 2019). Mississippi had the highest rates, with 11.6%, and Alaska had the lowest percentage, with 6.2%. In Texas, 8.4% of newborns were low birthweight. In Texas, low birthweight was highest for mothers under the age of 19 (9.3%) and mothers over 40 (12.1%).

Education was also a factor. The rate for a mother with only a high school diploma, in Texas, was 9.1% compared to a college graduate with a rate of 7.5% (America's Health Rankings, 2019). Race/Ethnicity showed drastic differences in low birth weight in Texas also. African-American children represented the highest percentage (13.5%) of babies born with low birth weight as compared to Hispanic (7.9%) and White (7.1%) newborns with low birth weight (America's Health Rankings, 2019).

Lead Hazards. One health risk for economically disadvantaged children was exposure to lead hazards (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Even low levels of lead in the blood were proven to affect a child's IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019b). Many poor children lived in older homes with high lead levels (Wood, 2003). The effect of lead exposure could not be corrected (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019b).

Food Insecurity. Food insecurity was also a concern for economically disadvantaged children (Child Trends Databank, 2018). A child was food insecure when he/she was unable to obtain sufficient quantities of food with properly balanced nutrients (Stringer, 2016, p.11). Even in well-nourished populations, such as the United States, children subjected to poverty were at an increased nutritional risk (McCurdy et al., 2012). Forty-two percent of children in households lived below the federal poverty level experienced food insecurity in 2016 (Child Trends Databank, 2018). Long-term exposure to a nutritiously inadequate diet could “reduce physical capacity, lower productivity, stunt growth, and inhibit learning” (Stringer, 2016, p. 11).

Rates of food insecurity were higher for black non-Hispanic children and Hispanic children (Child Trends Databank, 2018). White non-Hispanic made up 50% of food-insecure households but represented only 1 in 11 White families (Feeding America, 2019). The other half of food-insecure households included people of races other than white, non-Hispanic (Feeding America, 2019). One in five African American households and 1 in 6 Latino households were food insecure (Feeding America, 2019). In Texas, 38% of black children were affected by food insecurity, a rate twice as high as white children (Texas Kids Count, 2016). From 2013-2017, rural food insecurity rates (13.3%) were higher than urban rates (11.5%). The highest standards of food insecurity in the United States were reported in the “Mississippi Delta, Appalachia, the Rio Grande, and on American Indian Reservations” (Gunderson & Ziliak, 2014, p. 3). States in the South made up more than 40% of food-insecure households (Feeding America, 2019).

Family structure also played a role in food insecurity rates. Households led by single women “experience[d] food insecurity at 2.5 times the average household rate” (Feeding America, 2019, p. 1). Though food insecurity rates were reported to be on a continuous decline since 2014, the rates did not returned to pre-recession lows (Feeding America, 2019). The rates for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP) were considered on the rise in response to food insecurity (Feeding America, 2019). SNAP was considered the “nation's most important anti-hunger program” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020, p. 1). Nationally, 67% of SNAP participants were families with children, and Texas was higher than the national average, with 79% of recipients being families with children (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020, p. 1). In 2018, the

average SNAP benefit for a household with children was \$403 a month (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020, p. 2). On average, families received \$125 per household member. Health and nutrition were often a pathway by which poverty influenced other physical child outcomes such as low birth rate and growth stunting (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Obesity. Childhood obesity was reported as a severe problem in the United States (McCurdy et al., 2012,). It was reported as most common among low-income children (18.9%) when compared to higher-income children (10.9%) (Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2019c). Obesity put children at risk for health complications (CDC, 2019c). Children that were considered “stably poor” as a child were reported at “twice the risk of being overweight and obese” on into adulthood (Li et al., 2018, p. 100). These rates did not appear to reduce if the child experienced upward mobility as an adult; instead, the critical years to slow obesity rates seemed to be during the early childhood years (0-4 years old) (Li et al., 2018). Exposure to economic hardship during these first childhood years (0-4 years old) had “a long-term impact on overweight and obesity” rates (Li et al., 2018, p. 102).

Obesity was highest in children of racial and ethnic minorities (America’s Health Rankings, 2019). In 2016, among WIC-Enrolled young children (2-4 years old), obesity was highest among American Indian/Alaska Native children (18.5%) and Hispanic children (16.4%) and lowest in Asian/Pacific Islander children (10 %), Non-Hispanic black children (11.4%), and Non-Hispanic white children (12.1 %) (CDC, 2019c). These

percentages showed a decline from 2010 for all children, but especially for Hispanic children (19.3%) and American Indian/Alaska Native children (20.9%) (CDC, 2019c).

Cultural norms and family food practices (Kaufman & Karpati, 2007), as well as parenting styles such as negligent, permissive, authoritarian, or authoritative (Kakinami et al., 2015, p. 20), played a role in a child's healthy lifestyle habits. A parent's health choices also influenced the types of food children consumed (Heidelberger & Smith, 2015). For children and adolescents aged 2-19, obesity risk decreased as a parent's level of education increased (CDC, 2019c). Obesity posed an increased risk for many physical, social, and psychosocial health issues in children that continued to adulthood (America's Health Rankings, 2019). Some of these issues included cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, elevated blood pressure, asthma, sleep apnea, poor self-esteem, and depression (America's Health Rankings, 2019).

Asthma. Asthma affected over 7 million children below the age of 18 and had an even more significant effect on children subjected to poverty (Whitmore, 2011). This equated to about 7.5 % of the children in the United States (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020b). Asthma was considered one of the most chronic illnesses children experienced (Kravitz-Wirtz et al., 2018). Asthma was reported as a disease that affected the lungs. It caused “repeated wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing” and was controlled with medication (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a).

Children who consistently lived in high poverty neighborhoods showed higher risks of asthma than children who lived in an impoverished area for a short period or

never (Cantu et al., 2019). Lower socio-economic asthmatic children even had higher rates of morbidity due to economic and environmental factors (Lautenbacher & Perzanowski, 2017). Asthmatic low-income children living in poor neighborhoods had a higher risk for emergency department visits and hospitalizations when compared to asthmatic low-income children residing in nonpoor communities (Keet et al., 2017).

Also, low-income children living in inner-city areas were at a higher risk for emergency department visits and hospitalizations when compared to low-income children living in non-inner-city areas (Keet et al., 2017). Rural regions showed a lower prevalence of asthmatic children (Lautenbacher & Perzanowski, 2017). Living in high poverty neighborhoods posed early-life exposures to traffic-related and industry-related pollutions that increased a childhood asthma diagnosis (Kravitz-Wirtz, et al., 2018).

When compared by race, black children on Medicaid (10.4%) were more likely to be asthmatic than white (7.8%), Hispanic (8.7%), or Asian (5.9%) children on Medicaid (Keet et al., 2017).

Families often struggled with adequately managing asthma treatment for their children. Low-income parents with asthmatic children were likely to request a cheaper asthma drug for their child, use less medication than prescribed to make it last longer or delay doctor follow-up visits (Fung et al., 2014). These changes were mostly due to the financial stress that accompanied the treatments for an asthmatic child (Fung et al., 2014). Yet, caregivers that reported living in a safe neighborhood were more likely to optimally manage the asthmatic care of their child when compared to those that reported living in unsafe areas (Coutinho et al., 2013). Mothers even reported that their child's asthma

impacted job stability due to time off for treatments or due to the child missing school (Whitmore, 2011).

Neglect. Neglect was of great concern also. Neglect jeopardized the immediate health of a child. It influenced “long-term child outcomes such as mental and physical health, growth, intellectual development, behavioral functioning, economic productivity, and future parenting practices” (Widom & Nikulina, 2012, p. 68). Neglect was the most common type of maltreatment associated with children subjected to poverty (Jonson-Reid et al., 2012). Negligence was considered the failure to meet a child's physical and emotional needs (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020c).

There were many different variables reported from basic neglect to severe neglect. Basic neglect included lack of food, heat, inadequate shelter or clothing, and more severe neglect consisted of physical or sexual abuse, untreated illness or injury, lack of supervision, and abandonment (Jonson-Reid et al., 2012). Neglect of black, white, and Hispanic children subjected to poverty resulted in long-term mental health consequences (Widom et al., 2012). These mental health consequences varied by race but included posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), alcohol abuse, conduct disorder (CD), drug abuse, and homelessness (Widom et al., 2012).

Over 5% of poor children reported cases of neglect and abuse compared to less than 1% of nonpoor children (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). The rates of child abuse and neglect were reported as five times higher for lower socioeconomic compared to more top socioeconomic children (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). The percentage of neglect was higher for children in single-parent homes, with a parent

receiving welfare, having a parent with a drug or alcohol problem, and having a parent incarcerated (Widom et al., 2012).

Unintentional injuries were also at an increased rate for poor children (Dreyer et al., 2016). Injuries were reported as “the leading cause of death in children ages 19 and under” (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019a, p. 1). These unintentional injuries were the result of burns, drowning, falls, poisoning, and road traffic (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019a).

Social, Emotional and Behavioral Challenges

Living in poverty was considered critical to a child’s social, behavioral, and emotional development. Linkage of behavioral and emotional development to poverty was more apparent when a child experienced deep poverty, poverty during early childhood years, and long-term poverty (Moore et al., 2009). Poverty affected internalizing behaviors such as depression (Tucker et al., 2018), self-esteem, anxiety (Jensen, 2009), and social withdrawal (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Poverty also affected externalizing behaviors such as disobedience, hyperactivity, and opposition (Mazza et al., 2016). Poverty also increased the risk of teen pregnancy (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012), which impacted teens' socioemotional health (Moore et al., 2009). Absolute poverty, which measured the amount of food, type of shelter, and other essential material needed of a person, appeared to have a causal influence on a child’s mental, emotional, and behavioral health (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Children that grew up in persistently low-income families exhibited more internalizing and

externalizing behavior problems than children who were never poor (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997).

Internalizing Behaviors. Poverty surrounded itself with stressful conditions that were conducive to the development of many internal behavior issues (Zalaquett & Chambers, 2017). These psychological stressors (Miller et al., 2011) were found within economic concerns (Yoskikawa et al., 2012), living environments (Bradley et al., 2001), neighborhood atmosphere (Wade et al., 2015), and exposure to violence (Felitti et al., 2019).

Mental illness, which encompassed anxiety and depression, was another internal behavior disorder for children subjected to poverty. Low socioeconomic children exposed to multiple adverse childhood experiences such as neglect, abuse, bullying, and witnessing violence, were more likely to experience some form of mental illness (depression, bipolar disorder, or anxiety disorder) when compared to low SES children with no exposure to adverse childhood experiences (Wade et al., 2015). The higher intensity the exposure to categories of adverse childhood experiences, the increased risk of depression, or even suicide attempts on into even adulthood (Felitti et al., 2019).

Behavior problems occurred as early as 1.5 years old, and the gap increase[d] between poor and nonpoor children during early to middle childhood (Mazza et al., 2016). Girls exhibited internalizing behaviors at higher rates than boys (Comeau & Boyle, 2018). These behaviors were also considered time-dependent, meaning disparities increased depending on the length of time spent in poverty (Mazza et al., 2016).

Family Structure. Family structure was often reported as a confounder of internalizing behaviors. Living with a single parent also increased the odds a child exhibited internalizing behaviors such as depression, sadness, and anxiety (Comeau & Boyle, 2018). Children living in households headed by single mothers were more than five times as likely to live in poverty (Moore et al., 2009). If the mother had a low level of education, it increased the likelihood a young child exhibited internalizing behaviors (Comeau & Boyle, 2018).

Children subjected to poverty were more likely to experience frequent moves and changes in primary and secondary caregivers, which caused a negative social, emotional, and behavioral effect on the lives of the child (Moore et al., 2009). This form of household instability often worsened social problems in children (Berry et al., 2016). These children had a higher risk of emotional and behavioral outbursts, possibly due to less parental supervision, greater instability within the home from frequent moves and changes in family structure, and less positive relationships (Moore et al., 2009).

The social and emotional instability that low-socioeconomic children faced often lead to insecurity, depression, and poor school performance (Jensen, 2009). Similarly, children who experienced attachment avoidance (Klempfuss et al., 2018) or hostility (Tucker et al., 2018) from a parent reported high levels of internalizing behaviors. Chaos in a home was also linked to poverty and impacted the socioemotional development of children (Evans et al., 2005). Strong family support, on the other hand, reduced stress, anxiety, and depression in lower socio-economic children (Guerrero et al., 2006).

Stigma. Even at an early age, children were aware of the difference (Walker et al., 2008). They were aware of the stigma attached to lacking essentials, such as food, clothing, and school supplies (Quint et al., 2018), as well as the stigma attached to receiving government benefits (Trzcinski, 2002). Many families of poverty felt shame, depression, anger, and guilt from the inability to provide socially constructed expectations and needs without government intervention (Ali et al., 2018). Stigma about economic circumstances led many children subjected to poverty to isolate themselves from their peers and to become less engaged in informal activities such as visiting the movies (Quint et al., 2018). Children subjected to poverty often experienced isolation from higher socioeconomic classmates, which resulted in emotional pain (Weinger, 2000). On the flipside, bullying, as a result of economic status, was also prevalent (Walker et al., 2008). Children of lower-socioeconomic state acknowledged that “their appearance” lacking in status symbols such as brand name clothes and shoes “could mark them as poor” (Quint et al., 2018, p. 13). Poor children often chose other poor children as friends because they felt these relationships were more sincere and were less likely to be met with rejection (Weinger, 2000).

Externalizing Behaviors. Children raised by a single parent and exposed to persistent poverty had a higher risk of exhibiting externalizing behaviors such as cheating, lying, bullying, or cruel behavior (Comeau & Boyle, 2018). Other externalizing actions that showed up in children subjected to poverty were oppositional defiance, physical aggression, and hyperactivity (Mazza et al., 2016). Poor males were twice as likely as non-poor males to be arrested (Duncan et al., 2017, p. 428). Children that

experienced hostility from a parent often exhibited problematic substance use (Tucker et al., 2018). Poor children had more significant experiences with a trauma that affected their behavioral and mental health outcomes (Dreyer et al., 2016). An increase in income was a strong predictor of behavioral improvements (Duncan et al., 2017). Aggression rates in adolescents were lower as socioeconomic status increased (LeTourneau et al., 2011). Income seemed to have a stronger association with externalizing behaviors rather than internalizing behaviors (Duncan et al., 2017, p. 428).

Chaos. The literature recognized chaos in a home as instability and disorder (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2012; Berry et al., 2016). “Families with lower levels of income tend[ed] to have higher levels of household instability and disorganization” (Garrett-Peters et al., 2016, p.21). Household instability included the number of households moves, the number of people moving in and out of the household, and changes in the primary or secondary caregiver within a family.

Household chaos and hostile parenting combined exacerbate adolescent depression, physical and behavioral health, and problematic substance abuse (Tucker et al., 2018). Chaotic homes resulted in less responsive parenting (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2012) and also led children to exhibit higher amounts of externalizing behaviors (Klemfuss et al., 2018). A strong protective factor against aggression and substance abuse in poor adolescents was family support (Guerrero et al., 2006). Poor children even reported the positive attributes of family cohesion, which resulted in support, love, and empathy within their family structure (Weinger, 2000).

Teen Pregnancy. Long-term or early poverty was also a predictor of teen pregnancy and impacted a teen's socioemotional health (Moore et al., 2009). Teen pregnancy rates were different from teen pregnancy birthrates. Teen pregnancy rates also included abortions and fetal losses (Kost et al., 2017). Teen pregnancy rates have declined from 1990 (118 pregnancies per 1,000 teens aged 15-19) to 2013 (43 teen pregnancies per 1,000 teens aged 15-19) in the United States (Child Trends Databank, 2018). Teen pregnancy birthrates were much higher in the United States than in other developed countries (Grau et al., 2012). The United States ranked 29 out of 30 for the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries when it came to teen births (Burd-Sharps et al., 2012). Mexico was the 30th country. The national teen birth rate from 2015-2017 was 20.33 per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 (Maslowsky et al., 2019). When considering first-time teen birth, the national rate was 16.92 per 1,000 teen girls aged 15-19, and the repeat birth rate was 3.35 per 1,000 teen girls aged 15-19 (Maslowsky et al., 2019). Teen pregnancy amongst non-married teens rose in the 1980s (Grau et al., 2012). Teen birth rates peaked in 1991, with 61.8 births per 1,000 teen girls aged 15-19 (Grau et al., 2012). In 2009, 10% of the total children born in the United States were from teenagers (Grau et al., 2012).

Today's rates were showing a significant drop from the 1990s but continued to be a concern in the United States, most notably in the south. Counties with the highest rates for first-time teen births and repeated teen births were in the Southern States (Maslowsky et al., 2019). Counties in Texas showed significantly high rates of first births (35.98 per 1,000 teen girls aged 15-19 in 18 counties surrounding El Paso, Texas) and repeated

births (10.85 per 1,000 teen girls aged 15-19 in 32 counties surrounding McAllen, Texas) (Maslowsky et al., 2019).

In counties with a high percentage of repeated teen births, “the female population was more likely to be black and less likely to be white, Native American, or multiracial” (Maslowsky et al., 2019, p. 677). There was also an increase of county-level poverty, lower rates of high school completion, higher unemployment rates, greater overall income inequality, and fewer publicly funded family planning clinics (Maslowsky et al., 2019).

The history of family structure, as well as the history of poverty status, showed a significant impact on teen pregnancy rates. Teen pregnancy rates were more significant with teens who were themselves born from a teen mom when compared to those born to older moms (26% vs. 13%) (Smith et al., 2018). Two or more changes within the family structure during their childhood proved 26% higher rates of teen pregnancy when compared to no change in family structure (Smith et al., 2018).

Many teen moms came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Grau et al., 2012; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). Only 4% of females that were never poor as a child were pregnant teens compared to 13% that were poor half their childhood and 9 percent that were poor 25% of their childhood (Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2012). Teens that experienced two or more episodes of poverty in their lifetime were two times more likely to become teen mom than teens that never experienced poverty (Smith et al., 2018). Teen moms were more likely to continue the poverty cycle (Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

Maltreatment was another factor considered when looking at teen pregnancy rates. Of low-income teens that had a history of even one maltreatment report of abuse or neglect, 28.9% had at least one pregnancy between the ages of 10 and 17 (Garwood et al., 2015).

Teen pregnancy rates declined as family income levels rose above the poverty threshold (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Maternal education proved significant in teenage pregnancy rates. A “mothers’ college education was four times more common among U. S. young women who did not experience teen pregnancy when compared with those who did (20% vs. 5%)” (Smith et al., 2018, pp. 1251-1252).

The rates of teen pregnancy declined across all racial/ethnic groups from 1990-2013 (Child Trends Databank, 2018). There was a 66% decline for black teens from 226 per 1,000 teens aged 15-19 in 1991 to 76 per 1,000 teens aged 15-19 in 2013. Hispanic teens (from 166 per 1,000 to 61 per 1,000) and non-Hispanic white teens (from 83 per 1,000 to 30 per 1,000) both showed a 64% decline in teen pregnancies (Kost et al., 2017). Rates for “black and Hispanic teens were still more than twice the rate for non-Hispanic white teens” (Child Trends Databank, 2018, p. 1). High school dropout rates were higher for white and Hispanic pregnant teens than black teens (Penman-Aguilar et al., 2013).

Teen birthrates varied considerably over time. Teen pregnancy rates were declining for children with reduced incidences of poverty, parents with higher levels of education, a stable family structure, and non-teen parents (Smith et al., 2018). Some other possible suggestions for the decline in teen birthrates included an increase in contraceptives (Santelli & Melnikas, 2010), access to family planning clinics (Maslowsky

et al., 2019), and awareness of educational opportunities (Young et al., 2004). Yet, there were still high incidences of teen pregnancies in children that experienced sustained poverty (Grau et al., 2012), had learning disabilities (Garwood et al., 2015), had a teen mom (Smith et al., 2018), less access to family planning clinics (Maslowsky, Powers, Hendrick, & Al-Hamoodah, 2019), and reported incidences of maltreatment (Garwood et al., 2015).

Very young mothers experienced higher rates of mortality risks and birth complications (Brazier, 2017). Preventing early pregnancies increased the economic and health prospects of mothers and their children (Brazier, 2017).

Adverse Childhood Experiences. Adverse Childhood experiences were significant concerns for children in the United States. Children with more significant adverse childhood experiences were at a higher risk of behavior problems. They had a greater likelihood of being overweight or obese (Burke et al., 2011). In 48 states, at least 11% of all low-income children experienced multiple risks: households with no English speakers, low parental education, teen mother, residential mobility, single-parent, non-employed parents, and poor (Schmit et al., 2013). Texas also reported over 20% of low-income children experienced multiple risks, including households with no English speakers, low parental education, teen mother, residential mobility, single-parent, non-employed parents, and poor (Schmit et al., 2013).

Structural or Institutional Challenges

Structural factors were reported as “external to the individual, and they [could] have an enabling and constraining effect on people's outcomes” (Machingambi &

Wadesango, 2010, p. 215). Poverty had many causes, and some were related to structural challenges such as a recession (Trazcinski, 2002), unemployment rates (Siegel & Abbott, 2007), childcare barriers (Mattingly et al., 2017), and health expenses (Schnake-Mahl & Sommers, 2017). Structural and institutional Challenges included financial concerns, poor housing, family conflict, neighborhood conflict, and discrimination (Zalaquett & Chambers, 2017).

Housing Conditions. Unfortunately, housing conditions were often a factor that internally affected children's social connections. When they compared their home to their peers, they started to realize differences (Spyrou, 2013). Housing and environment were confounders of externalizing and internalizing behaviors in children (Kim et al., 2018). Children subjected to poverty often reported wishing they had their own room and feeling uncomfortable inviting friends to their home for sleepovers due to home conditions and lack of space (Spyrou, 2013). Children even reported having minimal space to play in their home as well as limited nearby parks or play areas (Walker et al., 2008).

An overpopulated home was considered a poor housing condition (OECD, 2009). Twenty-six percent of children under the age of 17 in the United States lived in overcrowded conditions (OECD, 2009). A crowded home simply meant there were more people in the house than the number of rooms (OECD, 2009).

Poor bedroom conditions impacted sleeping behaviors, which was reported to have a domino effect on a child's academic and behavioral performance (Walker et al., 2008). A poor environmental condition also consisted of noise levels, dirt and grime,

pollution, and litter (OECD, 2009). In the United States, 25% of children under the age of 17, reported living in a poor environment (OECD, 2009).

Children subjected to poverty were also likely to limit time outdoors and found their neighborhoods to be unsafe due to violence and drug use (Quint et al., 2018). These conditions made it less likely for them to have “buffers in their lives that [could] protect them from negative influences” (Moore et al., 2009, p. 5). This constant worry about safety within their neighborhood affected the overall well-being of the child (Walker et al., 2008). The impact of neighborhood poverty was more substantial for those living in poverty because they lacked financial resources to protect their families from the harmful effects of neighborhood disadvantage (Kim et al., 2018). This disadvantage was known as “double disadvantage: family poverty and neighborhood poverty” (Kim et al., 2018, p. 605).

Youth living in poverty neighborhoods believed their neighborhood was dangerous and were afraid of becoming a victim of violence (Shuval et al., 2012). Fear of violence was evident in both rural and urban areas (Walker et al., 2008). Children subjected to poverty displayed increased externalizing behaviors when they lived in neighborhoods with decreased social cohesion and safety levels (Kim et al., 2018). Poverty status had a more considerable influence on home safety than ethnic groups (Bradley et al., 2001).

Some protective factors youth incorporated to remain safe in their neighborhood were staying home during late hours, adhering to neighborhood norms, and befriending

trusted neighbors (Shuval et al., 2012). Some youth expressed that the only protective factor from violence was moving to a neighborhood with less crime (Shuval et al., 2012).

Homelessness. Children subjected to poverty were at a higher risk of being homeless at some point in their childhood (Milner, 2013). Homelessness affected multiple domains of child development (Machingambi & Wadesango, 2010), including academic, social, and behavior development (Milner, 2013). Homelessness also effected a child's mental health long-term (Widom et al., 2012).

Family break-up were often an outcome of homelessness. Children experienced separation from their families during homelessness. This separation was through foster care placements or placement with a family member during the families shelter stay (Shinn et al., 2015). Spousal separation was also a factor due to shelter conditions or stipulations (Shinn et al., 2015). Hardship was the number one factor related to family separations (Shinn et al., 2015). Families felt unable to care for their child due to poverty factors, arrest, or mainly wanted better stability for their child than the shelter could offer (Shinn et al., 2015). Aging out of foster care often led to homelessness in teens (Pokempner et al., 2009). These teens often left foster care without adequate resources and support to sustain themselves (Pokempner et al., 2009) and, therefore, could end up homeless.

Health care. Health disparities were “rooted in inequities and injustices [that] result[ed] from social structure and policy” (Levin, 2017, p. 431). Healthcare reform was an ongoing debate in the United States (Levin, 2018). When measuring health care equity, three key measures mattered: having a usual source of care, having an unmet care

need, and receiving a routine check-up in the past year (Schnake-Mahl & Sommers, 2017). The advocacy of poverty reduction was reported as a significant priority for our nation (Levin, 2017). A focus on health care was reported to be the prevention of disease, not fixing health issues afterward (Levin, 2018). Poverty and injustice were some of the primary causes of health disparities (Levin, 2018).

Less than one-third of low-income workers obtained jobs that offered healthcare benefits. Without these benefits, they were less likely to receive regular medical care or likely to forgo care due to cost (Khullar & Chokshi, 2018). Mortality and Morbidity rates were highly related to income disparities (Levin, 2018). Men and women in the top 1% of the income distribution expected to live 10 + years longer than men and women in the bottom 1% of the income distribution (Khullar & Chokshi, 2018). Access to healthcare and health coverage were more commonly a problem for poor adults (Schnake-Mahl & Sommers, 2017). These health disparities resulted in reduced income, “creating a negative feedback loop,” referred to as the “health-poverty trap” (Khullar & Chokshi, 2018, p. 2). These disparities affected the entire family.

For the 6.8 million children in the United States that lived in deep poverty, many adverse consequences affected their life course. These adverse consequences were a result of poor nutrition, environmental exposures, chronic illness, and language development (Khullar & Chokshi, 2018). The uninsured rates for children increased to 5.5 % in 2018 (Berchick & Mykyta, 2019). A 0.6% increase from 2017 (5.0%). The rates were the highest for children living in the south (7.7%) compared to those living in the

Northeast (3.6%), Midwest (3.8%), and West (4.8%) (Berchick & Mykyta, 2019). Over 11% of children in Texas were likely to be uninsured (Texas Kids Count, 2016).

Medicaid was reported as a public program that provided health coverage for children with a family income of at least 133% of the federal poverty level (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2020a). The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was reported as a state and federal program that provided health coverage to uninsured children that lived with families with an income too high to qualify for Medicaid health coverage, but also too low for private-sector health coverage (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2020b). Many children on CHIP had an eligibility range from as little as 170 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) up to 400 percent of the FPL and [varied] by the state (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2020b). The overall percentage of children under 19 in the United States with Medicaid or CHIP health coverage was 35.3% in 2018, a decrease from 36.5% in 2017 (Berchick & Mykyta, 2019). Again, the South (37.6%) had the highest percentages when compared to the Northeast (34.3%), Midwest (31.1%), and West (35.9%) (Berchick & Mykyta, 2019).

Child Care. Childcare was complicated for many families, but especially those living in or near poverty (Mattingly et al., 2017, p. 2). Children that received childcare subsidies were associated with higher child poverty rates (Dorabawila et al., 2012). Eligibility for childcare subsidy included being below the age of 13, or 19 if the child had special needs, the parent worked a specified number of hours each week, and household income percentage below poverty threshold varied by states (Dorabawila et al., 2012). Finding childcare had an impact on families leaving and returning to welfare (Siegel &

Abbott, 2007). Families of poverty found locating childcare that was open during shift work, holidays, after school, and when a child was sick to be problematic in maintaining a job (Siegel & Abbott, 2007).

Many families on the verge of poverty found that paying for childcare essentially was the factor that pushed them into poverty, especially in single-parent families or families with multiple children (Mattingly et al., 2017). “Among poor families with young children, 12.3% incurred out-of-pocket child care expenses” (Mattingly et al., 2017, p. 2). Childcare availability also kept low-income families from obtaining more desirable jobs that required night shifts and offered health benefits (Siegel & Abbott, 2007). This lack of opportunity led to a lower quality of life for their family.

A high-quality early child care program helped to reduce the negative aspects of growing up in poverty (Phillips et al., 1994). Low-income childcare centers offered higher quality care than middle-income centers, and the appropriateness of activities were significantly higher in low-income and upper-income centers than middle-income centers (Phillips et al., 1994). When considering teacher-child interaction, low-income centers were more detached, insensitive, and harsh than middle or upper-income centers (Phillips et al., 1994). Early childhood programs were reported as an active factor in promoting economic well-being (Reynolds et al., 2019). A structured, comprehensive early intervention education program, along with family services to low-income children, could improve economic and academic success (Reynolds et al., 2019).

Challenges Economically Disadvantaged Children Face in School

Children subjected to poverty “face[d] a number of disadvantages, most evidently in education” (Child Fund International, 2013). More than one in five children were living in poverty, and 30% of children raised in poverty did not complete high school (Child Fund International, 2013). Those that never completed a high school degree were seven times more likely to be persistently poor (Child Fund International, 2013). There was a decrease in graduation expectations based on the level of income and the percentage of students enrolled that were poor (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). One of the most significant predictors of children's educational success was their socioeconomic level (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Many studies spoke of the duration of poverty (Hair et al., 2015; Najman et al., 2009) as well as early exposure to poverty (Luby et al., 2013; Wood, 2003) as significant predictors of educational attainment. Gaps in educational performance began in the early years and often did not narrow in the coming years (Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

There were many outside-of-school influences on students of poverty that affected them including physical, psychological, or emotional abuse, addiction, health and nutrition problems, increased tardiness and absenteeism, and students' risk of homelessness (Milner, 2013). Children subjected to poverty were more likely to suffer from “conflict, violence, and social unrest than others” (Engle & Black, 2008, p. 251). These emotional, physical, and physiological factors distracted the learning process.

The socioeconomic status predicted cognitive ability and academic achievement (Farah & Hackman, 2012). Therefore, it was crucial to understand the factors associated

with “lower cognitive and educational outcomes” in order to be able to reduce the “intergenerational transmission of poverty” (Farah & Hackman, 2012, p. 307). The most significant performance gaps were between children in the lowest and highest socioeconomic status quintiles (Garcia & Weiss, 2017; Ladd, 2012). These gaps led to a “lack of social mobility across generations” (Garica & Weiss, 2017, p. 1).

Identification of Low Socioeconomic Students in School

Factors that were indicators of lower socioeconomic status included residence in a deprived area or low-income neighborhood, family income level, and eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals (Banerjee, 2016). Public schools used eligibility for free or reduced-priced meals or other public assistance to identify low socioeconomic students (Texas Education Agency, 2019g). Eligibility for free or reduced-price meals were obtained by multiplying the current year federal income poverty guidelines by 1.30 and 1.85 (Maskornick, 2020). For 2020, the Federal income poverty level for a family of four was \$26,200 (Azar, 2020). A link to children's ability to develop and learn was proper nutrition (Child Nutrition Act, 1966).

Family Factors

Family played a vital role in a child's life (Banerjee, 2016, p. 5). Parental interest and engagement in the academic success of a child offered “shielding effects on academic achievement brought about by deprivation” (Banerjee, 2016, p. 5). Yet, education-oriented practices were often minimal in high poverty homes (Banerjee, 2016). Home and family environment also improved or hindered the development of executive function in low-SES children (Hackman et al., 2015). The quality of the home

environment and parental care “impact[ed] both the development of brain regions involved in executive function as well as overall cognitive and behavioral development” (Hackman et al., 2015, p. 688).

Parental Education and Engagement. Parent education and family income accounted for variations “in independent characteristics of brain structural development in regions that [were] critical for the development of language, executive functions, and memory” (Noble et al., 2015, p. 777). The parent’s educational attainment effected the amount of school-based involvement a parent contributed (Cooper, 2010, Sime & Sheridan, 2014) and was the strongest predictor of children’s academic success (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). Notably, the education level of the mother was of significance (Ladd, 2012). Low maternal education compounded the “adverse effects of persistent poverty” (Comeau & Boyle, 2018, p. 90). Also, “the more literate a parent, the higher the warmth in both European and African American homes” (Davis-Kean, 2005, p. 298).

“Characteristics of children's families [were] associated with children's educational experiences and academic achievement” (U. S. Department of Education, 2019c, p. 1). Students living in poverty that lived in a household without a parent that completed high school or living in a single-parent home were more likely to receive low achievement scores, repeat a grade, and drop out of high school (U. S. Department of Education, 2019c).

Parent education also indirectly related to child achievement through parent expectations and beliefs (Boxer et al., 2011; Davis-Kean, 2005). Student aspirations and goals were often loftier than actual expectations when these students were from low-

resource neighborhoods and had parents with lower levels of education (Boxer et al., 2011). When children had “an emotionally stable and stimulating environment, the negative effects of financial restriction [could] be minimized” (Davis-Kean, 2005, p. 302). High parental expectations could slightly reduce the educational gap between high and low socioeconomic children (Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

Parent expectations for educational attainment began to increase from 1998 to 2010. Previously, a more significant portion (24.1 %) of low-SES parents expected their children to attain no more than a high school diploma. This number decreased by half in 2010 (11.4%) (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). By 2010, a more significant percentage of low-SES parents expressed that they anticipated their children receiving at least a bachelor’s degree in college (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). In homes with affectionate parents and a variety of books and playtime activities there was a higher educational expectation for the child (Davis-Kean, 2005). “The higher the expectations, the higher cognitive skills children ha[d]” (Garcia & Weiss, 2017, p. 16).

Family involvement predicted academic commitment and emotional control and was significant to GPA (Li et al., 2017). Parent support and positive attitudes toward achievement benefited educational outcomes (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). Increased parental time could “cushion the negative consequences of growing up in a low-SES household” (Garcia & Weiss, 2017, p. 4). Family involvement was increasingly important as students moved into adolescence, and especially for females (Li et al., 2017). Non-poor parents were significantly more involved than poor or low-income

parents (Cooper, 2010). Many parents with negative educational experiences lacked confidence in getting involved with their child's education (Sime & Sheridan, 2014).

Households with lower levels of income had higher levels of household chaos (instability and disorganization), and these children were “more likely to show lower levels of academic achievement” (Garrett-Peters et al., 2016, p. 21; Berry et al., 2016, p. 123). High levels of household disorder predicted greater developmental delays in children (Coley et al., 2015). The more household disorganization in a child’s home during the first three years of life, “the more poorly the child performed on a standardized assessment of receptive language” (Vernon-Feagans et al., 2012, p. 346). The receptive language was better when children experienced more responsive caregiving, and children from highly disorganized homes benefitted from more hours in childcare (Berry et al., 2016). Unfortunately, Low-SES children were less likely to speak English at home, live with two parents, attend a center-based Pre-K program, and participate in literacy practice activities at home (Garcia & Weiss, 2017).

Timing. Timing played a crucial role in educational outcomes for some students (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Persistent poverty was “significantly associated with poor school quality” (Barling & Weatherhead, 2016, p. 1311). Children who experienced poverty during preschool and early elementary years had “lower rates of school completion” compared to those who experienced poverty in later years (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997, p. 55).

Socioemotional Challenges

Students living in persistent poverty exhibited higher levels of externalizing (conduct related behaviors) and internalizing (emotional related behaviors) behaviors (Comeau & Boyle, 2018, p. 90). Poverty linked to chaos and “chaotic conditions convey[ed] some of the adverse, longitudinal effects of poverty on children's socioemotional development” (Evans et al., 2005, p. 564). The social and emotional instability that low-socioeconomic children faced often led to insecurity, depression, and poor school performance (Jensen, 2009). Often chaos in a home made completing schoolwork difficult for a student. Their home environment made it difficult for them to have a quiet place to study (Walker et al., 2008). Household chaos impeded a child's expressive language as well as the academic success (Garrett-Peters et al., 2016).

Bullying was reported as an issue for children of low-socioeconomic status. Even at an early age, children were aware of the differences apparent between low and high socioeconomic children at their school (Walker et al., 2008). They were aware of the stigma attached to lacking essentials, such as food, clothing, and school supplies (Quint et al., 2018). Children subjected to poverty often experienced isolation from higher socioeconomic classmates, which resulted in emotional pain (Weinger, 2000). On the flipside, bullying, as a result of economic status, was also prevalent (Walker et al., 2008). Children of lower-socioeconomic status acknowledged that “their appearance,” lacking in status symbols such as brand name clothes and shoes, “mark[ed] them as poor” (Quint et al., 2018, p. 13). Children often felt alienated from society and insecure about their socioeconomic status (Child Fund International, 2013). Poor children often chose other

poor children as friends as they thought these relationships would be sincerer and less likely met with rejection (Weinger, 2000).

School Achievement

Some of the school achievement challenges were described in this section.

Unequal Access. Children subjected to poverty suffered at higher incidences of developmental delay, learning disability, and slightly higher rates of emotional or behavioral problems (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Children did not enter kindergarten on equal ground. Most low-SES children “lag[ged] substantially in both reading and math skills” (Garcia & Weiss, 2017, p. 9). Reading and math skill levels rose with socioeconomic status (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Poor children in the United States were more likely to enter school with this readiness gap that grew as they get older and resulted in lower test scores and a higher risk of dropping out (Child Fund International, 2013). Socioeconomic disparities were linked to individual differences in cognitive development (Noble et al., 2015).

Demographic characteristics played a role in early reading skills and academic achievement (Herbers et al., 2012). Students on free meals or considered homeless between third and eighth grade had a lower reading fluency rate (40.8 words per minute for homeless students and 47.7 words per minute for free meal students) compared to general students with an 86.7 word per minute fluency rate (Herbers et al., 2012). The percentage of students in reading special education were more substantial for the homeless (33.4%) and students on free meals (20.9%) than general (10.8%) students (Herbers et al., 2012). The percentage of students in math special education programs

were similarly higher in comparison to general education students (Herbers et al., 2012). Personal mastery also was directly affected by persistent poverty (Barling & Weatherhead, 2016). Confidence and responsibility in accomplishing goals was an example of personal mastery (Barling & Weatherhead, 2016).

Resources. High-income and Low-income students described barriers they perceived to their academic success. Three main barriers were constraining environments, isolation (as compared to integration), and resource-poor (as compared to resource plenty) (Cross et al., 2018). Constraining environments, resources, and acceptance played a role in academic success.

Many high poverty students viewed attending college to be “risky in financial, social, and academic terms” (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2016, p. 23). They felt they must build safety nets that allowed them to “pursue their aspirations while minimizing the risks associated” (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2016, p. 23). Low-income and high-income students found that peer distraction, classroom management problems, boredom from stagnant academics, and lack of differentiation constrained their learning environment (Cross et al., 2018). Only the low-income district students reported mayhem in the schools that resulted in fights, severe behavior problems, and security guards (Cross et al., 2018). Also, students less likely to form bonding relationships at school had higher aspirations than expectations (Boxer et al., 2011).

Students from low-income and high-income schools reported different levels of resources. The low-income students felt the learning resources they had access to were inadequate. In contrast, the high-income students said family supported achievement

opportunities and adequate learning resources were available at school (Cross et al., 2018, p. 122). Low-income students reported resource scarcity to be a significant barrier to graduating from high school and to college attainment. Students faced challenges from “resource limitations of money, time, and information” (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016, p. 228). Students were discouraged by high school expenses such as prom, senior rings, senior pictures, college visits, completing college admission applications, and tuition prices (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016, pp. 228-230).

Only 46% of children’s homes had internet access if a parent had not completed high school in comparison to 72% of children having internet access in the home if a parent obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher (U. S. Department of Education, 2019d). Income played a role as well. Children in homes with a salary of \$75,000 or more were more than 70% likely to have internet access at home, and homes averaging \$10,000-\$20,000 annually were 49% likely to have internet access (U. S. Department of Education, 2019d). Multiple organizational supports were considered necessary for serving high-poverty students (Kraft et al., 2015).

Achievement Gap. An achievement gap was well documented between children of low and high socioeconomic levels (Hair et al., 2015). What was the cause of this achievement gap? The research found that “children from low-income households exhibit[ed] atypical structural development in several critical areas of the brain” (Hair et al., 2015, p. 827). Long-term exposure to poverty had the most significant impact on child cognitive outcomes (Najman et al., 2009).

Findings also showed that early exposure to poverty impacted brain development; therefore, quality early childcare helped mitigate those effects (Luby et al., 2013). Students from more economically advantaged homes typically had a better physical environment, better nutrition, a more stable home environment, and higher exposure to learning and literacy at home (Najman et al., 2009, p. 288). Whereas children subjected to poverty were more likely to have the opposite experience, and these multiple risk factors impeded educational attainment (Wood, 2003). Numerous risk factors also restricted persistence when students faced academic challenges (Brown, 2009). Early childcare and early intervention helped improve the adverse effects of poverty (Luby et al., 2013). Disruptions in children's primary caregiving put them at risk for cognitive skill gaps and attention difficulties in school (Brown, 2009).

Academic comparisons. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) required states to “ensure that poor and minority students [were] taught by qualified teachers at similar rates as other students” (Max & Glazerman, 2014, p. 1). A study of 29 diverse school districts found that disadvantaged students received less effective teaching on average in grades four through eight (Isenberg et al., 2013). This less effective teaching equaled an average disparity of about four weeks in reading and two weeks in math (Max & Glazerman, 2014, pp. 1-2).

Another study showed that “teachers in high poverty schools tend[ed] to be of lower quality” (Sass et al., 2012, p. 110). Lower quality teaching also reduced the achievement rates for lower socioeconomic students when compared with higher socioeconomic students. Kindergarten students of low socioeconomic families enrolled

for the first time between 2010-2011 had lower math and reading scores than kindergarteners of high socioeconomic families (Snyder et al., 2019). When compared again in fifth-grade, the results of low socioeconomic students for both reading and math were still well below the results for high socioeconomic students (Snyder et al., 2019).

Test scores were also likely to be lower in schools or districts with a higher percentage of poor children (Ladd, 2012). From 2003-2017 reading achievement rates were compared nationally for 4th and 8th-grade students. In 2003, only 45% of fourth-grade students eligible for free or reduced lunch were reading at or above the basic level, and 15% were at or above proficient level compared to 76% reading at the basic level and 42% being proficient that were not eligible for free or reduced lunch (Snyder et al., 2019). The results for 8th grade were just as unnerving. Fifty-seven percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch were reading at or above the basic level, and 16% were reading at or above proficient level compared to 82% of students not eligible for free or reduced lunch reading at or above basic level and 40% reading at or above proficient level (Snyder et al., 2019).

Reading rates slowly increased from 2003-2017 for students on free and reduced lunch. By 2017, 65% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch were reading at or above the basic level and 22% were reading at or above the proficient level in fourth grade compared to 82% at or above basic and 52% at or above proficient that were not eligible for free and reduced meals (Snyder et al., 2019). Eighth graders in 2017 had similar findings. Sixty-five percent of eighth-graders eligible for free or reduced lunch were at or above the basic reading level, and 21% were at or above the proficient level

compared to 86% reading at or above basic level and 48% reading at or above the proficient level that were not eligible for free or reduced lunch (Snyder et al., 2019).

Though low socioeconomic students' reading achievement rates increased from 2003-2017, there was still much to be done to improve students' academic success.

Compared to poor children in comparable countries such as Finland, Canada, and the Netherlands, poor children in the United States were likely to perform at lower levels in reading and math than in other countries (Ladd, 2012). The lower level of achievement in the United States was attributed to a much higher poverty rate as well as a lack of overall well-being for poor children (Ladd, 2012).

Texas showed similar results to the Nation in that low socioeconomic students were performing at lower rates than those of a higher socioeconomic status. The percentages of economically disadvantaged students in Texas by grade showed a range of 50.3% in twelfth-grade to 62.7% in first-grade (TEA, 2019c). Prekindergarten, “designed to serve children three years of age and older who [had] specified educational disadvantages,” showed the highest percentage with almost 90% (TEA, 2019c, pp. 17, 20).

STAAR measured individual student progress. It was “an assessment designed to measure the extent to which students have learned and [were] able to apply the knowledge and skills outlined in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the state mandated curriculum” (TEA, 2019g, p. 51). Across all tests in grades 3-8 and on every STAAR End of Course Exam, the Approaches Grade Level passing rate was lower for economically disadvantaged students than for all tested (TEA, 2019g). The

Approaches Grade Level indicated that “students [were] likely to succeed in the next grade or course with targeted academic intervention” (TEA, 2019g, p. 52).

Twice-exceptional students were those “identified as gifted and talented as defined under TEC §29.121 (1995) and who also ha[d] a disability based on federal or state eligibility” (TEA, 2019c, p. 23). In Texas, the most considerable number of twice-exceptional students from 2008-2019 were economically disadvantaged students (TEA, 2019c). Thirty-eight percent of economically disadvantaged students were in gifted and talented programs (TEA, 2019c).

Texas DAEP assignments for economically disadvantaged students.

Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) is an alternative education program established in 1995 by the 74th Texas Legislature to “serve students who commit specific disciplinary or criminal offenses” (TEA, 2019g, p. 91). In the state of Texas, in all Grades 1-12, economically disadvantaged students, along with African American students, accounted for “larger percentages of students assigned to DAEPs than of the total student population” (TEA, 2019g, p. 92). The lower grades yielded the highest percentages. For example, in the 2015-2016 school year, 64% of first-graders were economically disadvantaged, and 87.1% of economically disadvantaged first graders enrolled in DAEP (TEA, 2019g). Passing rates on STAAR for economically disadvantaged students in DAEP were much lower than the overall results of students across the state. In 2017, and in Grades 3-8, economically disadvantaged students in DAEP scored 25 percentage points lower than the overall economically disadvantaged

student reading rate and 29 percentage points lower in math (TEA, 2019g). EOC scores were significantly lower for economically disadvantaged DAEP students (TEA, 2019g).

Texas Economically disadvantaged dropout and retention rates. Overall, economically disadvantaged students repeated at least one grade throughout K-12 and were more likely to drop out of school. During the 2016-2017 school year, the highest rate of students retained were African Americans and Economically Disadvantaged Students, both at 3.4% (TEA, 2019g). Fifty-six percent of the student population were economically disadvantaged, and of the 56%, 69% dropped out of school (TEA, 2019g). These rates were higher than in the previous school year. Graduation rates were improving overall, but “barriers to on-time graduation remain[ed] for economically disadvantaged students, boys, and students of color” (Tingle et al., 2018, p. 16).

Stakeholders that can Support Economically Disadvantaged Students

A stakeholder, in education, “refer[ed] to anyone who [was] invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials” (Stakeholder, 2014). There were two types of stakeholders: internal and external. An internal stakeholder worked within the school system (school and district staff) and impacted what occurred inside the school (Paine & McCann, 2009). External stakeholders had “a strong interest in school outcomes” but did not “directly determine what [went] into producing those outcomes” (Paine & McCann, 2009, p. 5). Examples of external stakeholders were parents, local business leaders, and community members.

Schools were becoming more proactive in “involving a greater diversity of stakeholders, particularly from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds” as well as those who had been “historically underserved by schools or that [had] underperformed academically” (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). Socioeconomic status was a primary predictor of student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2010). Therefore, many stakeholders shared in the responsibility of closing the achievement gap for low socioeconomic students (National Education Association, 2019b).

Even more, stakeholders needed to come together to meet the children's basic needs in the community. Maslow spoke of a theory of human motivation that focused on basic needs beginning with physiological needs such as water, food, and shelter, then moved to safety, love and belonging, esteem, and last self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Physiological needs dominated all other needs (Maslow, 1943) and the effect from lacking these basic needs impacted children in multiple ways (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Stakeholders worked within the community to attenuate barriers that impeded students' success (Rhim, 2011) and prevented students from reaching the highest level of motivation (Maslow, 1943).

Parents

As a stakeholder, this did not merely mean involvement in the school but instead a focus through collaboration and dialog on student learning (Paine & McCann, 2009). Parental time spent with children reduced the achievement gap between high and low socioeconomic children (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Parents needed to provide an early learning experiences for their child (National Education Association, 2019a) and needed

to create a home environment that supported learning (National Education Association, 2019b).

The home environment had a vital role in the success of all students, especially those living in poverty (Cross et al., 2018; Hebert, 2018; Milner, 2013; Williams et al., 2017). Involving parents improved student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2010). Parent involvement was vital in supporting the education process (National Education Association, 2019a). Low-income children had “the most to gain when schools involved parents, and parents [did] not have to be well educated to help” (Leithwood et al., 2010, p. 695). As a stakeholder, it was crucial for parents to stay connected with teachers and other school personnel as well as share the same high expectations as the teachers and administrators of their children (National Education Association, 2019b).

Students

Surprisingly, students were not typically involved in educational matters that affected their lives (Nthontho, 2017). Engaging children as stakeholders in their education resulted in positive outcomes for school and student improvement (Nthontho, 2017). One element of a student’s academic success included perseverance. The desire to persevere even when obstacles were challenging came from within (Baska, 2018). Students with an internal determination to better their life situation proved to be “strong willed, survivors, and very much focused on their goals to achieve” (Curtin et al., 2016, p. 6). These students also tended to display a positive personal attitude, have self-confidence, positive self-esteem, and envisioned a bright future for themselves (Curtin et

al., 2016). It was an individual decision to continue education, resist temptations, and rebound from setbacks (Baska, 2018).

Resilience was another individual trait of academic success. Resilient students were help seekers (Curtin et al., 2016). These students learned how to find and establish connections and essential resources that helped them make the right decisions (Curtin et al., 2016). Resilient students were also less likely to retain a grade, be suspended from school, or be arrested (Finn & Rock, 1997). They were more likely to come from a two-parent home with expectations to finish a college program (Finn & Rock, 1997).

Another element of academic success involved sacrifice and courage for the first-generation college student. The sacrifices low-income students and families made for a college degree to be obtained could be overwhelming (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016). Students often had to divert family resources and responsibilities, as well as courageously navigate post-secondary education to create a better future, which may or may not happen (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016).

Schools

Schools had a vital role in the success of all students, especially those living in poverty (Cross et al., 2018; Hebert, 2018; Milner, 2013; Williams et al., 2017). Teachers, administrators, counselors, and other school personnel “play[ed] a critical role in the social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development” of students of poverty (Milner, 2013, p. 23). These students relied on schools in ways more affluent students may not have to (Milner, 2013). Students from low-income families were less likely to avoid behaving in a problematic way (Hopson & Lee, 2011). This problem behavior lowered

when students from low-income families were part of a positive school climate (Hopson & Lee, 2011). Multiple protective factors such as supportive teachers, academic rigor, and sustained family pride that insisted on college attainment helped low-income students stay focused on academic success (Hebert, 2018; Williams et al., 2017).

Nutrition. Nutrition was also a stakeholder in the academic success of low socioeconomic students. Long-term exposure to a nutritiously inadequate diet could “reduce physical capacity, lower productivity, stunt growth, and inhibit learning” (Stringer, 2016, p. 11). Schools provided students a nutritious breakfast and lunch, and many low socioeconomic students were dependent on those meals (Milner, 2013).

Teachers. Students from low-income schools were more successful when they felt they had supportive teachers and school members (Cross et al., 2018). A positive school climate was associated with better grades (Hopson & Lee, 2011). In a study, 100% of the students that participated attributed their academic effort to a teacher who cared and had empathy towards their situation (Williams et al., 2017). Students with significant emotional and behavioral problems that were part of a teacher-student relationship program showed an increased grade point average compared to those who were not part of such a program (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Emotionally and academically supportive educators were a factor for low-income student’s goal attainment (Hebert, 2018).

Educators were the most often mentioned external factor that led to student academic success (Turner & Juntune, 2018). Successful students felt their teachers expressed interest in their work, offered guidance, and provided necessary resources

(Turner & Juntune, 2018). Teachers offered profound support, challenged students academically, and motivated them towards success (Hebert, 2018). Educators and schools provided resources that assisted in a child's development (Milner, 2013) and emotional as well as academic support (Hebert, 2018).

Interventions such as tutoring, feedback progress monitoring, small-group instruction, and cooperative learning also improved educational achievement for low SES students in elementary and middle school (Dietrichson et al., 2017). Schools could provide these students with additional academic support in struggling areas (Milner, 2013). Tutoring had a significant effect (Dietrichson et al., 2017). Tutoring was “one of the most basic ways to boost the achievement of students who [were] performing at lower levels than their peers” (Gamoran et al., 2012, p. 378).

Resources provided by schools that students may not have access to elsewhere also proved beneficial (Milner, 2013). Low SES students often only had access to museums and other learning centers through school field trips (Milner, 2013). Teachers could serve as “first responders” in identifying students who needed additional instructional support (National Education Association, 2019b).

Students needed similar academic supports at the college level (Browman & Destin, 2016; Hebert, 2018; Turner & Juntune, 2018). Low SES students at the university found the institutional climate and structural supports to be critical factors to academic efficacy (Browman & Destin, 2016). Graduate students credited their academic success to a full support system that included internal and external supports (Turner & Juntune, 2018). Turner and Juntune (2018) further found that academics were an escape from day-

to-day life experiences as well as a chance to escape future poverty. Low-income first-generation college students found that supportive teachers and counselors, rigorous instruction, a push for an improved life for their family, intellectual engagement in college through honors programs, study abroad, and student organizations as well as faculty mentoring influenced their academic success and their focus on achieving their goals (Hebert, 2018).

Educators also played a role in promoting a feeling of belonging within a community through community service and cultural pedagogy (Decuir-Gunby et al., 2010). According to Merriam Webster, an educator was “one skilled in teaching.” This skill extended beyond academics and included cultural competence (DeCuir-Gunby, 2010). It was crucial for educators to repeatedly examine their “expectations, beliefs, and practices through the equity lens” to ensure they were providing effective instructional practices (National Education Association, 2019b). After all, “Substantial positive change in student learning [could] only come about on a broad scale when major changes occur[red] in the daily interactions of teachers and students” (Slavin & Madden, 2013, p. 54).

Peers. Positive peer relationships also contributed to academic success. Seventy-five percent of the students in a study reported imitating their peers’ academic behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations (Williams et al., 2017). Positive peer relationships also provided needed distractions from poverty situations and allowed students to focus on school work (Williams et al., 2017).

Administrators. Administrators had an essential role as a stakeholder. It was reported that administrators created a professional learning community (National Education Association, 2019b) and built a supportive climate (Hopson & Lee, 2011). The school leadership team was crucial in creating a culturally responsive classroom and ensuring a high-quality education (McKinney, 2014). Administrators provided educators with opportunities to attend needed professional development that would “provide strategies for working with students and their families who [were] not achieving success” (National Education Association, 2019b). The school leadership team required a vision of a productive learning environment shared with teachers, students, and parents (McKinney, 2014). Everyone had a responsibility for the educational outcome of the student.

Community

Creating a healthy, well-rounded child required support from the entire community (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Community-School partnerships provided a range of social, health-related, and educational services that benefited many low socioeconomic children (Weiss & Reville, 2019). Community members brought in another perspective, which proved invaluable in tackling difficult changes (Rhim, 2011). Community members were also often aware of external resources such as nonprofit organizations that benefited students and helped to eliminate barriers (Rhim, 2011).

Mobile medical teams such as Smile Programs, Kids Vision for Life, and The Breath of Life were external resources provided by the medical community to eliminate financial and transportation barriers by bringing necessary dental, vision, and asthma

check-ups to the school. The focus of these mobile units was to provide access to needed medical care. Health challenges in children subjected to poverty were often due to “inadequate access to preventative, curative, and emergency care and [were] affected more frequently by poor nutrition, single-parent families, dysfunctional families, and poor housing” (Wood, 2003, p. 709).

School staff led community involvement in more than just fund-raising efforts and attending school activities. They promoted initiatives that improved student achievement (Paine & McCann, 2009). Business and community leaders needed to partner with schools and provide resources and opportunities that enriched school programs (National Education Association, 2019b). Connections between the community and school-based supports promoted achievement by reducing learning barriers and improving developmental assets (Dearing et al., 2016). Such a whole-child approach (home, community, and school) led to better outcomes (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). In one Cincinnati school, between 2007-2010, the dropout rate of 84% became a graduation rate of 82% due to community partnerships (Blank, 2011).

In Texas, the mission of Communities in Schools (CIS) was “to surround students with a community of support, empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life” (Texas Education Agency, 2019a). CIS engaged the community in an individual case management service, which provided six components:

- Health and human services
- Supportive guidance and counseling
- Parental and family engagement consult

- Academic enhancement and support services
- College and career awareness
- Enrichment activities (Texas Education Agency, 2019a)

CIS was reported to have programs in only 142 of the over 1,000 school districts in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2019a).

The weight of change did not rest on school employees alone, “turnaround efforts require[d] a substantive and long-term engagement of key stakeholders that influence[d] students and the schools they attend[ed] (Rhim, 2011, p. 33). Providing proper support required understanding students' strengths and needs as well as their parents and the communities they lived in to tailor a system of community services to meet them (Weiss & Reville, 2019). Such a system could be considered a “community resource bank” (Rhim, 2011, p. 34). Aligning school and community resources created the best conditions and the most effective learning approach (Blank, 2011).

Legislators

An essential role of our national, state, and local policymakers was to “provide adequate resources to close achievement gaps” (National Education Association, 2019b) as well as to ensure a fair and equal educational experience (U. S. Const. amend. XIV). ESEA had numerous reauthorizations in the last 50 years. The reauthorization that was most known for elevating the federal government's role being No Child Left Behind (Jennings, 2018). ESSA, the replacement for NCLB, “sharply reduced the federal government's role, especially in the design of school accountability systems” (Harris et al., 2016, p. 1). ESSA increased the states' authority over measuring student progress,

intervention in the lowest-performing schools, and evaluation of teachers and principals (Jennings, 2018, p. 1). ESSA placed more control at the State level, so state legislators were required to ensure continued growth in student achievement, student progress, and closing the gaps (TEC, 2017). Significant resources such as textbooks, supplies, and professional development or curricular training were essential in ensuring student achievement (Slavin & Madden, 2013).

The desegregation of schools was highly effective in reducing achievement inequality (Coleman et al., 1966). Yet, today neighborhood schools were not often racially diverse, and reducing segregation between schools was essential (Gamoran et al., 2012). Children of all racial groups attended schools, typically where their group was significantly overrepresented (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015).

There were two ways to measure segregation: unevenness and isolation (Reardon & Owens, 2014). Unevenness looked to the extent a “student population [was] unevenly distributed among schools” in its district (Reardon & Owens, 2014, p. 201). Isolation measured a high or low proportion of a given racial group enrolled in a school (Reardon & Owen, 2014). High remaining levels of segregation “place[d] black, Hispanic, and Native American children in the most disadvantaged schools” (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015, p. 332). Whether charter or non-charter, their schools were “poorer, more racially homogenous, and lower performing on standardized tests than those attended by white and Asian students” (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015, p. 338).

Economically Disadvantaged Stakeholders that can Support ED Students

This section will discuss various stakeholders that experienced economic disadvantage.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality Theory considered how inequalities such as race, gender, class, and sexuality were created (Hancock, 2016). Intersectionality considered the logic in the social construction of each inequality and how it operated within power relations (Hancock, 2016). Intersectionality focused more on the intersection of multiple inequalities (Walby et al., 2012). Many political movements focused on one inequality: equal salaries for women, but what about women that fit more than one inequality, such as comparable salaries for Hispanic women? Sometimes political communities lacked a focus on the difficulties that surmounted from the intersection of more than one inequality (Walby et al., 2012). The purpose of Intersectionality Theory was to bring to focus groups that fell into more than one identity category (Walby et al., 2012). The discussion that follows assumed the relationship that most minority teachers possibly identified with two-three inequalities based on race, gender, and socioeconomic level growing up. An example of three inequalities would be an African American female teacher raised low socioeconomic.

A nationwide shortage of teachers was reported, and with this shortage, there was a “growing gap in the racial, cultural, and experiential match between teachers and students” (Carothers et al., 2019, p. 41). Successful teachers often were known for reflecting on their beliefs and assumptions, having an awareness of the environment in

which they teach, and setting and maintaining high expectations for all students (Gehrke, 2005). Schools with a high percentage of poor students were often already lacking in resources.

Additionally, a mismatch of race and cultural backgrounds existed between teachers and students (Gehrke, 2005). Due to this mismatch, some high schools and universities were working together to recruit first-generation college students into the career of teaching (Carothers et al., 2019). Minority students often found it easier to relate to minority teachers due to navigating similar experiences as members of nondominant culture (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Teachers of the same race/ethnicity had a greater understanding of the “students’ social and cultural worlds” and were more likely to interpret behaviors more accurately in class (Banerjee, 2018, p. 96). “Knowing one’s own cultural and social identity also led to a better understanding of students and their identities and experiences” (Gehrke, 2005, p. 15).

Racial Matching

Student perceptions of teachers did vary by the teacher’s race/ethnicity (Cherng & Halpin, 2016, p. 412). When the “7Cs” were compared (challenge, classroom management, care, confer, captivate, clarify, and consolidate), students, and particularly minority students, showed more favorable perceptions of Black and Latino teachers than white teachers (Cherng & Halpin, 2016, pp. 409-411). Assignment to the same race/ethnicity teachers fostered better teacher-student relationships and helped students connect with their schools (Banerjee, 2018). Some research found that students performed higher academically when matched by race/ethnicity (Redding, 2019; Yarnell

& Bohrnstedt, 2018). Low-performing white and black students especially benefited from being placed with a race-congruent classroom teacher (Egalite et al., 2015).

School campuses with diverse teacher populations proved beneficial to all students (Banerjee, 2018). The way a teacher perceived a student's learning ability determined placement in ability groups, especially in the earlier years (Banerjee, 2019). Black students performed worse with White teachers than they did with Black teachers when compared to other student groups (Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Black students scored higher on achievement tests when placed in a Black teacher's classroom (Redding, 2019). Reading and math achievement rates were higher when own race/ethnicity matching occurred (Egalite et al., 2015). When teachers shared the same race/ethnicity with their students, they could serve as "role models, mentors, advocates, or cultural translators" (Egalite et al., 2015, p. 44).

Hispanic and Asian students were least likely to encounter a teacher of their racial/ethnicity matching (Bates & Glick, 2013). There was also less evidence of the academic effects of Latino/a student-teacher matching (Redding, 2019). One study showed adverse effects of race-matching specifically for low-performing Hispanic students (Egalite et al., 2015). For Asian students, race matching showed positive gains in math (Egalite et al., 2015). Asian students benefited most from a race-congruent teacher during the middle and high school years. In contrast, white and black students showed the most benefit during the elementary years (Egalite et al., 2015). Teachers tended to rate language-minority Asian and Hispanic children lower in literacy skills than white children (Ready & Wright, 2011).

The way behavior is perceived also changed based on the race/ethnicity of the teacher. Students from disadvantaged groups (low-socioeconomic level, from single-parent homes, homes where English was not the primary language, of a minority race/ethnicity) were more likely to be rated high for externalizing behaviors (Bates & Glick, 2013). Disadvantaged groups placed in culturally matched classrooms were more likely to receive favorable behavioral ratings (Bates & Glick, 2013; Redding, 2019). In the higher grades, the measure of externalizing behaviors was consistently different based on the race of the teacher (Redding, 2019). On the contrary, one study found that Black and White teachers rated black high school students as equally disruptive and off-task compared to white students (Scott et al., 2019).

Student-Teacher Ethno-Racial matching was also associated with the recognition of internalizing behaviors (Weathers, 2019). Teachers of the same race/ethnicity were more likely to recognize and seek additional support for students battling internalizing behaviors (Weathers, 2019). Students were more likely to modify their internal expectations to match that of their teachers when they shared the same race/ethnicity (Redding, 2019).

Cultural Matching

Sociodemographic disconnects occurred between teachers and students. Students were often taught by teachers that had never experienced poverty, which could create a cultural disconnect between teachers and students. Classroom teachers “tend[ed] to underestimate students’ skills in lower-achieving and socioeconomically disadvantaged classrooms” (Ready & Wright, 2011, p. 351). Black and White teachers were equally

inaccurate in their perceptions of Low-SES student ability (Ready & Wright, 2011). Socioeconomic status had less influence on a teacher's perception of a student when the child was in a higher socioeconomic classroom or higher-ability class (Ready & Wright, 2011). Teacher perceptions often became more accurate as the school year developed (Ready & Wright, 2011), and the teacher was more acquainted with the student. The question is, did the student's skills begin to reflect the teacher's perception, or did the teacher's perception change once getting to know their students? When literacy development was analyzed, students gained skills if their skills were previously overestimated, and students exhibited lower rates of literacy if their skills were previously underestimated (Ready & Chu, 2015). Widening inequalities in literacy development was due to teacher misperceptions (Ready & Chu, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to look at what educators of similar cultural backgrounds said about cultural matching. To tackle this section, I had to explore dissertations about educators and administrators that grew up in poverty.

Smith Study on Superintendents Raised in Poverty. Three superintendents were interviewed and referred to as Dr. Grace, Dr. Faith, and Dr. Hope (Smith, 2014).

Dr. Grace recognized the difference in her home life about middle school. In middle school, she began comparing herself to her peers. She expressed that education was not valued in her home and that getting help with homework was difficult. She mentioned that "it is difficult to articulate experiences of poverty to people that have not lived it" (Smith, 2014, p. 73). Dr. Grace mentioned that teachers throughout K-12 school, college, and her career were her main support for encouragement to continue her

learning. She believed that “education [was] the only long-term solution to poverty” (Smith, 2014, p. 79). Therefore, it was essential to have an excellent team of teachers who were passionate about changing kids' lives. She expressed that due to her home life, she empathized with students and supported them while having high expectations.

Dr. Faith was another superintendent in the Smith (2014) study. Dr. Faith empathized with children bullied in school, because she experienced this as well. She understood how difficult it was to face peers when your home lacked access to water, electricity, or hygiene products. She mentioned that educators needed to see the difference in students and “make decisions based on the differences” (Smith, 2014, p. 101). Dr. Faith also focused on counselors preparing all students for college so that no one missed an opportunity due to financial barriers. She implemented ACT and SAT boot camps. She requested counselors visit classrooms about grants and scholarships available to students, as well as the criteria to qualify. She felt children subjected to poverty needed to be aware of the resources available to them. She did not feel her counselors did this when she was in school. She felt she missed out on many opportunities that would have helped her financially complete college.

Dr. Hope believed in servant leadership. She believed her background in poverty made her more receptive to other situations. She felt her duty was to students first. She retained a grade due to a language barrier and remembered the embarrassment of that. Dr. Hope believed advancing in a grade or graduating must be earned by the student, but she also believed some students needed an extra chance or push to be successful. She felt life skills, such as eating with a five-piece setting, shaking hands when greeting others, and

how to politely say, no thank you were important life skills for students to learn. Due to her background in poverty, she tried to provide clothing and shoe banks for students. Dr. Hope also organized fundraisers so that finances were never a reason for a student to miss out on being part of any school activity. She said it was crucial not to forget where you came from, and as a leader, you “can change and break the cycle of poverty through a means of education” (Smith, 2014, p. 124).

All three superintendents recalled becoming a teacher, because they enjoyed playing teacher as a child. The three superintendents felt a critical part of understanding their students' experiences of growing up in poverty was experiencing it themselves and, therefore, being able to empathize with them. The three women felt their poverty experience helped shape their leadership practice and leadership personality (Smith, 2014). With the growing number of students living in poverty, they felt their life experiences impacted their student's lives. They all believed in no excuse leadership and encouraged their students to be their best, and they shared with students that, “If I can do it, you can do it” (Smith, 2014, p. 133). All three did not know how someone not raised in poverty could empathize with their students living in poverty. They believed in professional development that helped educators on their campus see beyond the desk and into the students' lives and needs.

Davis Study of Educators Raised in Poverty. In another study (Davis, 2005), six classroom teachers shared their experiences of growing up in poverty. They all spoke of embarrassment and negative encounters with other students at school due to used clothing, poor housing conditions, and lack of cleanliness. Those experiences helped

them to empathize with their students who shared in this same embarrassment. They mentioned that they “work diligently to make them feel as important as the other students” (Davis, 2005, p. 72). Linda, one of the educators interviewed, mentioned that she did not accept, I can't, as an excuse, and instead wanted students to “believe that they can do anything that they put their mind to” (Davis, 2005, p. 85). Vassandral, another educator, also stated that she strived to give her students hope and told them that “education is something that once earned cannot be taken away” (Davis, 2005, p. 85). Ada, one of the educators interviewed, believed that she reached students by sharing her own life experiences. She felt students were often surprised that she had to deal with similar situations and shared her experiences as an opportunity for her to teach her students about overcoming obstacles.

The six teachers recalled becoming a teacher because they felt it was just meant to be, loved children, or were motivated by a former teacher or family member. The six teachers also shared their responsibility as stakeholders. They felt their lived experiences helped them to better relate to their students and allowed them to be a better teacher. All six participants named an educator instrumental in their academic success. They furthered mentioned that they had teachers that left “lasting impressions on their lives, some for the better, and some for the worse” (Davis, 2005, p. 86).

Houston Study on Resilience in Educators Raised in Poverty. Another study included 15 educators (Houston, 2010). The educators were a mix of principals and classroom teachers. This study focused on factors that built resilience in these educators that lived in poverty. Many educators spoke of dysfunctional families, lack of

community, barriers in school success, negative personal relationships, and hurtful stereotyping (Houston, 2010, p. 170). Factors they felt promoted resilience was having high expectations for themselves and setting goals for the future. Many of them were able to do this due to social or emotional support from family, a peer, or a school employee. The 15 participants felt they were able to overcome the obstacles of poverty by “becoming empowered, utilizing opportunities, obtaining college degrees, and acquiring jobs” (Houston, 2010, p. 182).

The educators in this study, pursued the profession for varying reasons, such as to help others, to do better than their past teachers, to help kids that are not helped, to provide kids with an opportunity to beat the system, because they received a migrant child scholarship, or because teachers encouraged them to want to be teachers. As far as being a stakeholder, many of the educators in this dissertation had negative memories of experiences with educators, and therefore saw their role as necessary for making a positive impact on their students. One educator mentioned that sharing his story with his students, offered encouragement, and helped build connections with his students (Houston, 2010, p. 183). Another educator felt her experiences helped bridge school and parent engagement (Houston, 2010, p. 183).

Rasmussen Study on Principals’ Raised in Poverty and Resilience. The last study utilized interviews with three principals (Rasmussen, 2015). This study, like the Houston (2010) study, looked at how these principals' lived experiences impacted the resiliency of students in poverty. The three principals in this study were Mrs. Rosario, Mr. Jamal, and Mr. Stevens. The three principals felt their background impacted their

leadership beliefs and helped them create a culture of resilience for their students living in poverty. They mentioned meeting the individual needs of both their students and their staff. To meet these needs, they cleared out the “roadblocks” so “students [could] meet high expectations” (Rasmussen, 2015, p. 53). Some of these roadblocks included merely having necessary school supplies or needing extra time or extra support to complete their schoolwork. As leaders, they felt it was essential to utilize the community for supply donations and provided time before and after school for student homework support.

For their staff, they focused on professional development that could provide strong pedagogical and content knowledge as well as some training on understanding poverty. The leaders emphasized high expectations for staff and students. Mrs. Rosario felt that having the right team was crucial for building resilience in students. She felt the staff must love kids and believe in the power education had to change lives (Rasmussen, 2015, p. 62).

Some other strategies for building resilience included involving parents and students in the education process and demonstrating respect for all the students and their families (Rasmussen, 2015). Mr. Jamal believed in building relationships with students and teaching them life skills such as conflict resolution and character-building traits. Mr. Stevens found that building relationships between staff and students as well as students and students through a culture of acceptance to be essential. He refers to this as “Get on the BOAT,” in which BOAT is an acronym for “Belief, Ownership, Accountability, and Team-work” (Rasmussen, 2015, p. 67).

Prior Experience Matching

Teachers that had some prior experience with low socioeconomic children tended to be more invested in their role as a stakeholder for these students. This experience could be from attending a high-poverty urban school as a student to volunteering in a high-poverty school during college or from student teaching in a high-poverty school (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). When this experience was present, teachers were more committed to working with medium to high-poverty students and for a sustained amount of time that equaled at least three years (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Most public-school teachers took their first teaching job near their hometown or the town where they went to college (Boyd et al., 2005). With the full availability of teacher preparation programs, most could obtain their degree close to home (Reininger, 2012). If the percentage of the student's earning bachelor's degrees from these high poverty schools increased, there could be an increase in the number of teachers produced from these schools (Reininger, 2012). With teachers having less geographic mobility than most other college graduates, hard to staff schools could benefit from producing more teachers (Boyd et al., 2005).

Simulations have proved to improve the educator's mindset and actions toward children subjected to poverty. Educators that experienced a poverty simulation tended to switch their thinking from an individual deficit view of poverty to seeing the causes of poverty as external to the individual (job market, prejudice, and discrimination) (Engler et al., 2019). As teachers that experienced this form of simulation reflected on their experience, they learned to relate more to their students and parents and shift to an increasingly external or structural mindset of poverty (Engler et al., 2019).

Experience and exposure to high-poverty schools or simulations of a low socioeconomic family's life experience were essential for lowering teacher attrition. Turnover rates for low-performing and minority students were much higher and more detrimental to these students' academic outcomes (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Teacher turnover was much more harmful to “students in schools with underserved student populations” (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Understanding the children taught was crucial (Parker & Craig, 2017). Greater multicultural awareness and sensitivity to our students' lived experiences were vital for educators to have (Garmon, 2004). Community partnerships helped to create “viable pathways” to understanding families and the context of their lives and move away from a deficit way of looking at children living in poverty (Parker & Craig, 2017). Educators needed to move toward becoming more self-aware and self-reflective of their commitment to social justice for their racial and culturally diverse students (Garmon, 2004).

Structural/Ecological Theory of Poverty

Throughout the literature, many theories framed the idea of education and poverty. Critical Race Theory (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2015; Milner, 2013; Reardon & Owens, 2014; Widom et al., 2012) was one lens used. Critical Race Theory “help[ed] to elucidate the intersected nature of race and poverty” (Milner, 2013, p. 10). As a theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory “center[ed] race at the core of its analysis, but it also recognize[d] other forms of oppression, namely class, and gender” (Howard, 2008, p. 964). Critical Race Theory initially emerged as a “response to critical legal studies and civil rights scholarship” (Milner, 2013, p. 12). Critical Race Theory allowed

scholars to ask important questions about race and inequities in education (Howard, 2008).

Two other theories evident in the literature were the Developmental Systems Theory (Dearing et al., 2016; Engle & Black, 2008) and Stage-Environment Fit Theory (Cross et al., 2018), and both of these are based on the Ecological Systems Theory. The Developmental Systems Theory looked at “interactions at the individual, family, school, community, and cultural levels” (Engle & Black, 2008, p. 245). The Stage-Environment Fit Theory looked at the school's impact on student development (Cross et al., 2018). The approach this study focused on is the Ecological Systems Theory, as developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Ecological Systems Theory

This study followed the tradition of a structural/ecological theory of poverty (Evans, 2004; Lipina, 2011; McAuley, 2019; Newes-Adeyi et al., 2000; Reynolds et al., 2019), also known as Bronfenbrenner’s revised bioecological theory (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017). The Bioecological Theory focused on four defining properties: (1) person, (2) context, (3) process, and (4) time (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 241).

Person. The person factors referred to the characteristics of the individual, such as age, gender, and physical and mental health (Lipina et al., 2011). In the center of the Bioecological Systems Theory was the individual.

Context and Process Factors. The context and process factors referred to Bronfenbrenner’s four original ecological systems: micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-system, and the process through which these systems interacted (Ettetal & Mahoney,

2017). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory proposed that an individual was influenced by “systems” of interaction and the constant evolving interaction between the person and their environment (p. 3). This theory considered the effects of the social environment on human behavior and recognized the limitations when we only focused on one underlying agent or process (Evans, 2004). With the ecological systems theory model, both micro and macro systems both shaped an individual's growth (Banerjee, 2019, p. 397). “The ecological environment [was] conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3) (see Figure 1).

Microsystem. The microsystem was the innermost level and included the person's immediate setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), such as their home, neighborhood, and school. The microsystem consisted of any environment with which the individuals had direct interaction (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017).

Mesosystem. The Mesosystem “comprise[d] the interrelations among two or more settings” in which the child participated such as “home, school, and neighborhood peer group” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). The Mesosystem required looking at the relationships between single settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). How did each microsystem interconnect? In the mesosystem, “what happen[ed] in one microsystem affect[ed] what happen[ed] in another microsystem” (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 240). Since parents and schools were the “central microsystems” of a child, clear communication between “activity leaders and parents and teachers [was] necessary to foster alignment across settings” (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 240). This interconnectedness was vital for the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Exosystem. An exosystem “refer[red] to one or more settings that did not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur[red] that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). In the Exosystem level, individuals were involved with the microsystems but not directly (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017). The individual was often not even present in the settings that profoundly affected their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The exosystem was an essential level to research because factors within this level were often “a gateway to accessing activities, particularly for young children” (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 240). An exosystem for a child included a parent’s work or a school board action. One of the most powerful influences that affected a young child was “the conditions of parental employment” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 4). A severe economic crisis could impact a child depending on their age and the time when their family suffered financial insecurities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

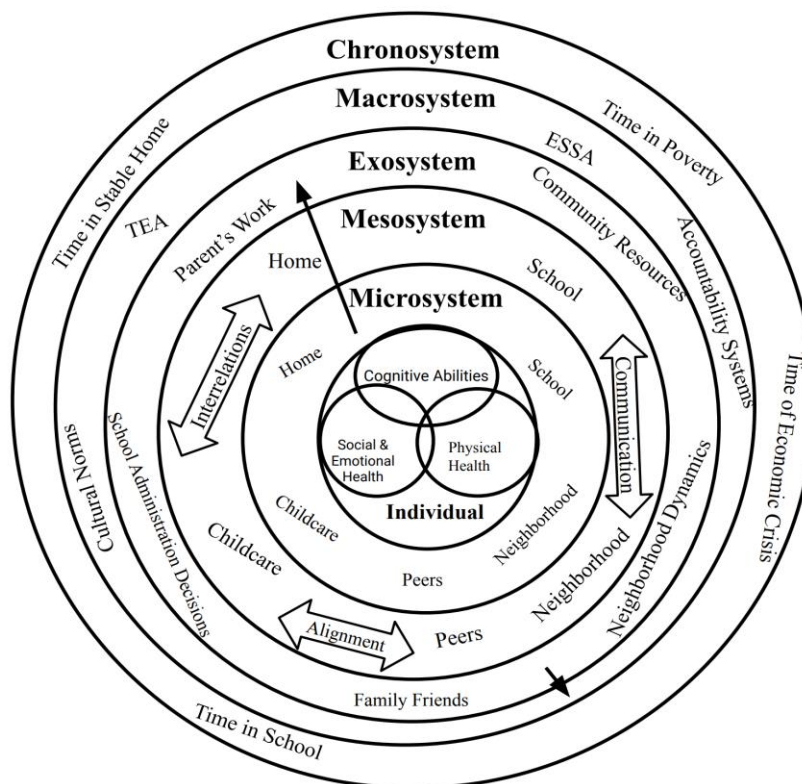
Macrosystem. The macrosystem included consistencies within a culture in the form of its “micro-, meso-, and exosystems, as well as any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The macrosystem was the outermost layer and consisted of the “overarching beliefs, values, and norms, as reflected in the cultural, religious, and socioeconomic organization of society” (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 240). This level of the ecological systems theory determined how the individual perceived or interpreted future experiences (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017). Participation in activities differed for children based on socioeconomic status due to neighborhood resources or level of home responsibilities (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017).

Activities that aligned with a child's cultural background were associated with more positive experiences and outcomes (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

Time. The last property, time, was often called the Chronosystem and was “concerned with historic changes in society across generations” (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 241). “Longer duration (consistency across months or years) of participation [were] found to predict larger program effects than [did] less exposure” (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 241). An example would be the effects of a longer duration of poverty, a more extended period family is out of work, or more prolonged exposure to an economic or wartime crisis.

Figure 1

Ecological Systems Theory



Theory of the Problem

Three main frameworks for theories of the causes of poverty were behavioral, structural, and political (Bradshaw, 2007; Brady, 2019).

Behavioral Causes

Theories that emphasized the role of the individual attributed poverty to intrinsic deficiencies (Turner & Lehning, 2007) and considered the individual's behavior to be a key factor causing hardship (Brady, 2019). The individualistic causes included alcohol and drug abuse, lack of effort, lack of skills, poor money management, sickness, and a poor attempt at self-improvement (Weiner et al., 2011). This individualistic ideology primarily believed that “individuals [brought] poverty upon themselves” (Turner & Lehning, 2007, p. 70) and therefore felt intervention should focus on changing human behavior (Lehning et al., 2007).

Those who believed in individual behavior as causes of poverty felt poverty was the result of “ethical, intellectual, spiritual, and other shortcomings in people who [were] experiencing it” (Gorski, 2016, p. 381). Individuals were “strongly influenced by groups such as the residential neighborhood where they [grew] up, the schools they attend[ed], and even the coworkers at various jobs” (Durlauf, 2011, p. 144). Behavior theories were “rarely compared against the evidence for an alternative theory” (Brady, 2019). It is unclear whether their arguments were causal in nature (Brady, 2019). The behaviors of the economically disadvantaged were thought of as either “calculated adaptations to prevailing circumstances” or as “emanating from a unique 'culture of poverty,' rife with deviant values” (Bertrand et al., 2004, p. 419). While the behaviorist theorist saw the

problem as human weakness, the structuralist saw it as related to situational barriers and looked to ways to overcome it (Bertrand et al., 2004). This study utilized an ecological-structural framework to consider the situational barriers of the individuals and did not blame the individuals for their hardships.

Instead of an individual deficit, this hardship was more of a social structure issue. Situational barriers (Bertrand et al., 2004) or poverty traps (Durlauf, 2011) were the causes. Social structure theorists looked more at the effects of residential neighborhoods on education (Durlauf, 2011), the impact of lacking in health education and health care (Bertrand et al., 2004), and lack of employment opportunity or suitable wages (Brady, 2019) as the most significant indicators of poverty. After all, in areas where there was mass impoverishment, the behavioral approach meant that “entire populations in these locations each [had] the same individual flaws” (Ullucci & Howard, 2015, p. 176).

Single-parent families led by women also struggled financially. The idea of this as an individual fault rather than a link to a lack of affordable child care, lower wages, and fewer job options was debated (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Another critique was that long-term poverty impacted mindset and lowered aspirations, which could be challenging to overcome when the community around you was deeply impacted by poverty (Wolf, 2007). A widespread societal view that individual behaviors were the cause of poverty (Bradshaw, 2007) completely overlooked the challenges poverty raised for individuals and the various ways families and children displayed determination and resilience despite these challenges (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). A challenge for behaviorists was presuming behaviors caused poverty rather than poverty caused behaviors (Brady, 2019).

Structural Causes

This second ideology focused on social or economic causes (Hirschl et al., 2011; Lehning et al., 2007; Turner & Lehning, 2007; Weiner et al., 2011). Theories of poverty that “focus[ed] on society [found] fault in its broader, structural forces” (Turner & Lehning, 2007, p. 69). These social causes included failure of society to provide good schools, high taxes, lack of opportunity, low wages, and prejudice and discrimination (Weiner et al., 2011). The economic system kept poor people behind due to wages and lack of benefits (Bradshaw, 2007). Turner & Lehning (2007) similarly attributed society's role to poverty due to lack of affordable housing, low wages, and unequal schools. Economic growth, which led to increased jobs and increased wages, was a powerful predictor for reducing poverty (Brady, 2019). This recognition of social factors was a means for perpetuating poverty as a standard idea (Durlauf, 2011).

An unhooking from the deficit view of poverty (poverty is the result of shortcomings in the people experiencing it) was recommended (Gorski, 2018; Ullucci & Howard, 2015). A more structural ideology was favored, recognizing “people experiencing poverty as targets, rather than causes, of these unjust conditions” (Gorski, 2018, p. 59). A significant challenge for educators working in low-income communities was shifting their belief that “individual behavior [was] the primary explanation of why individuals [were] poor” (Ullucci & Howard, 2015, p. 180). Robinson (2007) further found that “teachers who believed poverty was rooted in social structures were more apt to be present in and to persist at poor schools” (p. 541). Those establishing equity policies in schools reflected on and considered how to be more responsive to challenges

economically disadvantaged families faced with transportation issues, childcare issues, time issues due to working multiple jobs, and lack of paid leave, rather than blaming parents for being uninvolved and not caring (Gorski, 2016).

Political Causes

Political theorists focused on the concept that power relations drove poverty. They contended “that power and institutions cause[d] policy, which cause[d] poverty and moderate[d] the behavior-poverty link” (Brady, 2019, p. 164). Economically disadvantaged people lacked political connections and lacked influence in the political system, which made their interests more vulnerable (Bradshaw, 2007).

Another tactic debated was welfare generosity. On one side, income distribution through welfare benefits was considered a factor for reducing poverty (Brady, 2019). Others felt that the social welfare system negatively impacted those it intended to serve (Wolf, 2007). Essentially it became a political cause if there was no social mobility (Wolf, 2007). A great question to consider when considering political purposes was how much government or state policies could alter the given characteristics that led to poverty, such as single motherhood, the labor market, and minimum wage (Bradshaw, 2007; Brady, 2019). Systemic barriers were tied to political causes of poverty (Bradshaw, 2007). Political reasons and structural causes were sometimes considered the same (Brady, 2019).

This study utilized a Structural Political Theory for the problem of poverty.

Theory of the Relationship

Some of the main theories focused on social relationship throughout the literature include Attribution Theory (Heberle et al., 2018), Social Identity Theory (Akfirat et al., 2015), Cultural Capital Theory (Lee & Bowen, 2006), and Standpoint Theory (Kokushkin, 2014).

Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory described “people’s causal analyses of (attributions about) the social world” (Fiske & Taylor, 2017, p. 443). Attribution determined if the behavior of an individual was due to the “external situation or the person’s internal disposition” (Fiske & Taylor, 2017, p. 443). Attribution Theory looked at causal reasoning for individual behavior and the behavior of others (Heberle et al., 2018). Whether the attribution was internal or external, would it change over time or be stable, and whether or not the individual influenced the action was questioned (Heberle et al., 2018). The development of Attribution Theory was guided by a “grand theory” of motivation that attempted to formulate a “conception in which causes influence[d] action via the mediating mechanisms of specific effects and expectancy” (Weiner, 2010, p. 28). A criticism of Attribution Theory was that it tended to support changing the individual's behavior with “little or no regard to the impact of the social environment” (Lehning et al., 2007, p. 7). This theory did not fit my purpose due to my interest in looking more at the social environment and its influence on the individual’s behavior.

Social Identity Theory

Another theory that focused on a social relationship was Social Identity Theory. In Social Identity Theory, “the self [was] reflexive in that it [could] take itself as an object and categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 4). A person acknowledged oneself as belonging to a social group often preestablished by social categories (Akfirat et al., 2015). Those who were similar were labeled the in-group and often discriminated and compared themselves against the out-group, which was different (Stets & Burke, 2000). With social identity, there was a “uniformity of perception and action among group members” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 4). When a person established a negative social identity about one's group, they tried to improve their situation to alter their social identity (Akfirat et al., 2015).

Cultural Capital Theory

Another theory of relationship was cultural capital theory. Pierre Bourdieu felt that capital was the foundation of social life and determined one's position in the social world (Social Theory Re-wired, 2016). Pierre Bourdieu developed this theory focused on “social relationships or networks that provide[d] access to resources” and how these relationships remained active (Lee & Bowen, 2006, p. 197). Cultural Capital Theory referred to “the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belonging, credentials, etc. that one acquire[d] through being part of a particular social class” (Social Theory Re-wired, 2016, p. 1). The more cultural capital, the more significant advantage in obtaining more capital that benefited the

family. Having similar cultural capital with others “create[d] a sense of collective identity and group position” (Social Theory Re-wired, 2016, p. 1). In contrast, those who had less cultural capital had less access to resources (Lee & Bowen, 2006). Some forms of cultural capital were valued more and therefore could help or hinder a person’s social mobility (Social Theory Re-wired, 2016).

Standpoint Theory

The last theory evident in the literature was Standpoint Theory. Standpoint theory “offer[ed] the ideas of multiple knower-positions (instead of a single one), culturally and discursively grounded in experience” (Kokushkin, 2014, p. 10). Standpoint theory arose in the 1970s as a feminist critical theory (Harding, 2004). Standpoint theory recognized that power relations shaped common knowledge, but that oppressed groups understood the experience from their perspective while also being familiar with the dominant views (Paradies, 2018). Standpoint theory offered significant and substantial insight into the perspectives of groups that were often marginalized and oppressed (Buzzanell, 2015). Standpoint theory brought to light a better understanding of what educators felt was most important to their overall academic success (McAuley, 2019). According to standpoint theory, the views of economically disadvantaged educators were different than that of educators that were not economically disadvantaged and even different from that of administrators (Harding, 2004). With standpoint theory, insider sociology brought “more soul” to the study as well as increased an understanding of the concern, rather than ignored it (Adler & Jermier, 2005, p. 943). By giving voice to educators that grew up

economically disadvantaged, more objective knowledge claims were generated (Adler & Jermier, 2005) about the experiences of children from these same experiences.

This study utilized three of the above theories of social relationship: Social Identity Theory (Akfirat et al., 2015), Cultural Capital Theory (Lee & Bowen, 2006), and Standpoint theory (Kokushkin, 2014). Social Identity Theory helped to identify the thoughts about the educator's individual self and how those thoughts were shaped and motivated by perceived resources (Destin, 2013). Cultural Capital Theory (Lee & Bowen, 2006) considered the cultural capital that either helped or hindered the educators in this study's social mobility (Social Theory Re-wired, 2016). This study acknowledged the "relationship between identity and experience" and was valid because the truth claims of the educators were "from the heart" (Kokushkin, 2014, pp. 13-16). Standpoint theory offered a "variety of alternative epistemologies grounded in the experiences of actual people" (Kokushkin, 2014, p. 16) that were unique to them (McAuley, 2019).

Significance of the Study

This section will discuss the significance of the study.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite being at the forefront of concerns for K-12 education policy and practice, Poverty continues to be an ongoing and severe problem in the United States (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). In Texas, 60.6% of students were reported to be economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2019a). During the 2016-2017 school year, 52.3% of the students enrolled in public school in the United States were on free/reduced lunch (Snyder et al., 2019). Since 65% of children living in poverty in Texas were not

proficient in reading and math, (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018) it would be important to find out what factors could help students improve in these areas. It was well documented that socioeconomic level was a significant predictor of educational achievement (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Yet, how to improve that success in low socioeconomic students was not well documented. Many educators did not understand the needs of children growing up in poverty, or how to help them obtain academic success.

Importantly so, much of the research reached out to parents and students living in poverty to identify barriers to success such as teacher bias (Banerjee, 2019), parent engagement (Cooper, 2010; Sime & Sheridan, 2014), and chaos in the home as it related to academic success (Berry et al., 2016; Garrett-Peters, 2016; Vernon-Feagans et al., 2012). There was much literature from the perspective of students of poverty in regards to their unique experiences of poverty and barriers they faced (Cross et al., 2018; Heberle et al., 2018; McAuley, 2019; Shuval et al., 2012; Spyrou, 2013; Trzcinski, 2002; Walker et al., 2008). Little was available on protective factors contributing to these children's academic success (Williams et al., 2017).

There was a sociodemographic disconnect between teachers and students. Students were often taught by teachers that had never experienced poverty (Ready & Wright, 2011). Much of the empirical literature surveyed or interviewed teachers in high poverty schools or districts that did not grow up low socioeconomic (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Engler et al., 2019; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Kraft et al., 2015; Parker, 2017; Ready & Chu, 2015; Weathers, 2019; Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Widening

inequalities in literacy development were due to teacher misperceptions (Ready & Chu, 2015). Instead, the literature focused more on conditions of the workplace in a high poverty school (Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Kraft et al., 2015; Robinson, 2007), teacher shortage and retention in high poverty schools (Boyd et al., 2005; Carothers et al., 2019; D'Haem & Griswold, 2017; Garmon, 2004; Whipp & Geronime, 2017), professional development to reform the mindset of educators on poverty (Engler et al., 2019; Parker, 2017), and teacher perceptions and bias of high poverty students (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2010; Scott et al., 2019; Weathers, 2019).

Economically disadvantaged children faced many challenges in school (Banerjee, 2016; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Child Fund International, 2013; Garcia & Weiss, 2017; Noble et al., 2015) and in culture (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Engle & Black, 2008; Pascoe et al., 2016; Stringer, 2016; Wood, 2003; Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

Currently, much of the interventions used to support low socioeconomic students was ineffective based on standardized test scores for this population (Isenberg et al., 2013; Snyder et al., 2019; TEA, 2019b). Much of the literature spoke to these challenges but was limited in understanding. Understanding the supports and resources needed to address these challenges were minimal.

A theoretical and conceptual framework was essential in developing a philosophical grounding of a study. A philosophical grounding was not evident or at least difficult to determine in much of the literature. This study outlined its theoretical and conceptual framework for the reader to understand fully. This study followed the tradition of an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of poverty (Evans, 2004;

Lipina, 2011; McAuley, 2019; Newes-Adeyi et al., 2000; Reynolds et al., 2019). Unique to this study was Bronfenbrenner's revised Bioecological Theory (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). The Bioecological Theory focused on four defining properties: (1) person, (2) context, (3) process, and (4) time (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017).

This study focused on a structural (Hirschl et al., 2011, p. 359; Lehning et al., 2007, p. 7; Turner & Lehning, 2007, p. 69; Weiner et al., 2011, p. 200) and political (Bradshaw, 2007; Brady, 2019) problem of poverty. A significant challenge for educators working in low-income communities was shifting their belief that "individual behavior [was] the primary explanation of why individuals [were] poor" (Ullucci & Howard, 2015, p. 180). Teachers that believed poverty was rooted in social structures were more apt to be responsive to challenges economically disadvantaged children and families faced (Robinson, 2007).

The philosophy of relationship (Cross et al., 2018; McAuley, 2019; Redding, 2019; Sime & Sheridan, 2014) was also essential to understand when determining how some students of poverty moved pass barriers and others did not. This study utilized three philosophies of relationship: Social Identity Theory (Akfirat et al., 2015), Standpoint Theory (Kokushkin, 2014), and Cultural Capital Theory (Lee & Bowen, 2006) which was limited in use throughout the literature. All three theories of social relationships combined were not evident in any of the research.

Original Contribution

This study utilized an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that looked at the child as an individual along with the *micro-*, *meso-*, *exo-*, *macro-*, and

chronosystems that impacted the child's life. The focus of the problem was from a structural/political standpoint. Many educators felt poverty and the side effects of it were a behavioral issue. Hopefully, this study can sway those perceptions when educators and administrators read about current educators that were once students facing the same barriers.

The student was not responsible for the many barriers they faced in school and culture and often were misunderstood or overlooked in the classroom. This was why the question was asked about obstacles the participants faced in school and culture, as well as how these obstacles were negotiated. Educators often did not understand the socioemotional, behavioral, and academic challenges these students faced each day and may have even felt unprepared to meet the needs of these children. The question was raised about obstacles that may have affected the participants mental, physical, or social health? It was hoped this would bring an awareness to the external and internal struggles these students faced. I also wanted to pursue what the educators felt could help the students become academically, behaviorally, and socially successful? They were able to draw on their life experiences as well as their educator experiences.

In understanding how some students rise from poverty, three theories of social relationships were present in the study, which was not evident in empirical research. These three theories of social ties were Social Identity Theory, Standpoint Theory, and Cultural Capital Theory. Some of the research utilized a theory of relationship, but none addressed all three. By using all three approaches of social relationship theory as the conceptual framework for this study, the researcher learned about the identity as

perceived by the educator through social categories, the educators' standpoint on life experiences while living in poverty, and what social relationships or networks provided resources for the educator. Questions that brought light to this include: Who in your home or community had a significant impact on your life and why? Was there a significant person that aided in your academic success? How did administrators and teachers treat you in school?

We are failing these children academically, as is evident in standardized test scores across Texas. This study looked at these educators to find best classroom practices to increase academic success and build relationships with these students that improved their socioemotional, behavioral, and cognitive abilities. This approach was unique from the very few dissertations found that interviewed teachers that grew up in poverty. Those studies focused more on factors that lead them to teach and what factors they felt were vital to their success, all of which were important, but limited in nature—mostly leaving out the socioemotional, behavioral, and cognitive needs of these students. Some ideas were presented, such as clothing banks, school supplies, and tutoring, which focused more on physical or cognitive needs, but these ideas I felt could be detailed more. What about socioemotional health and intervention strategies? These concerns led to the questions in this study about how an educator of poverty understands the educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students? and How they improve the educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students? Hopefully, this study will provide a more vibrant narrative from these successful educators that touch on all aspects of school success for these students.

Research question five was evident in the literature, but I felt it was still an important component. This study wished to pursue why these participants wanted to become a teacher and any challenges they faced in the process. This will not be the focus of the study, but it was still an important question to ask. I wanted to honor their devotion and dedication to the field of education by exploring their path to becoming a teacher.

Summary

In this review of the literature, Poverty was defined and common challenges that surrounded poverty were explored. Many of the risk factors students of poverty faced and how they affected a child's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral health were examined. Parent engagement and its impact on academic success as well as barriers to educational attainment were explored. The researcher then shifted from inhibitors to factors that promoted academic success and how the home, community, and school could assist students of poverty with resources, academic rigor, and emotional support to reach their aspirations. The role of the educator was emphasized as a key role in academic support. Research was lacking in exploring how an educator that grew up in poverty obtained academic success and what factors led them to become an educator. A structural/ecological theory of poverty was utilized as developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Chapter III describes the methodology used for this study. The methodology was chosen based on the purpose and problem addressed in Chapter I. Narrative nonfiction inquiry was the method utilized to share the narratives of educators and their experiences as a child of poverty and an educator. This study explored the lives of six educators that

were raised in poverty. Chapter III described narrative inquiry, the participants of the study, the role of the researcher, data collection, data analysis, provisions of trustworthiness, and how the findings would be communicated.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology of this study. This qualitative study utilized a philosophy of phenomenology and the method of narrative inquiry. The philosophy of phenomenology focused on people's perceptions of the world (Sloan & Bowe, 2014) and the structures of their experience (Smith, 2018). Narrative inquiry “uses stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences, the changes and challenges of life events, and the differences and complexity of people's actions” (Kim, 2016, pp. 6, 11). Chapter 3 discussed the problem and purpose of this study and details the research design and method.

Research Problem Statement

Although educational policy at the federal and state-level demanded a fair and equal opportunity for high-quality education for all students, and although improving academic achievement was a central focus on the high-stakes standards-based accountability movement, the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students in public schools continued to suffer.

Research Purpose Statement

This research study aimed to understand how successful educators who grew up in poverty understood and improved the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

- (1) How do successful educators who grew up in poverty understand the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?
- (2) How do successful educators who grew up in poverty improve the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?
- (3) What were the childhood experiences of successful educators who grew up in poverty? What cultural and social obstacles did they face? How were such obstacles negotiated?
- (4) What were the K-12 educational experiences of successful educators that grew up in poverty? What obstacles did they face in school? How were such obstacles negotiated?
- (5) Why do successful educators who grew up in poverty decide to pursue an education degree and career?

Research Philosophy

The empirical research utilized many philosophies to discuss the experiences of poverty. Structuralism (Engler et al., 2019; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Rank et al., 2003; Ready & Chu, 2015; Ready & Wright, 2011; Scott et al., 2019; Weathers, 2019) and phenomenology (Ali et al., 2018; Cross et al., 2018; Heberle et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017) were the two most common research philosophies utilized. Structuralism followed a more quantitative approach to research and was evident in much of the empirical literature regarding teacher perceptions of children subjected to poverty (Engler et al., 2019; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Ready & Chu, 2015; Ready & Wright, 2011; Scott et al., 2019; Weathers, 2019).

A structural approach was also evident in studying ways to improve the academic success of high poverty students (Banerjee, 2019; Berry et al., 2016; Cooper, 2010; Garrett-Peters et al., 2016; Hair et al., 2015; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Webster-Stratton et al., 2008). Structuralism “reveal[ed] certain organizational rules and patterns that [gave] it a definite form and structure,” and it focused less on the “immediate world around one” and more on the “larger reality behind that world” (Baronov, 2012, p. 85).

There were four main premises of structuralism: (1) the whole is prioritized over the part (individual social phenomena are not of interest); (2) the actions of individuals were attributed to rules of the social system; (3) reason triumphed over empiricism; and (4) there was a general reliance on “ahistorical and universal structures” (Baronov, 2012, pp. 104-108). An example of a structuralist philosophy when considering an element of poverty, such as hunger, would be to examine the structures within a system that

prevented the family from obtaining adequate food rather than considering any unique characteristics of the family (Baronov, 2012). With a structuralist philosophy, poverty was the result of “structural failing at the economic, political, and social levels” (Rank et al., 2003, p. 5).

The other primary research philosophy in the empirical literature was phenomenology (Baronov, 2012). During the first half of the 20th century, phenomenology was considered a significant foundation of all philosophy (Smith, 2018). Phenomenology was commonly used throughout the empirical literature to bring to light the effects of poverty on the people experiencing it (Ali et al., 2018; Heberle et al., 2018). It was also evident in the empirical literature to compare perceptions of barriers to academic success (Cross et al., 2018) and to discuss protective factors that contributed to the academic success of students living in poverty (Williams et al., 2017).

There were two main types of phenomenology: descriptive as developed by Edmund Husserl (Heberle et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017) and interpretive (Cross et al., 2018) as developed by Martin Heidegger (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Both types of phenomenology were present in the literature. According to Husserl, descriptive or transcendental phenomenology looked at the essences of the act of consciousness (Chemero & Kaufer, 2015) or identified the essences of human experiences (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Interpretive phenomenology was also known as hermeneutic or existential phenomenology (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). With interpretive phenomenology, the observer interpreted the language of text, and this “interpretation of individual subjectivity play[ed] a central role” (Baronov, 2012, p. 133). Each type of phenomenology worked to

uncover “the life world or human experience as it [was] lived” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1295). Phenomenology directed how we “recognize[d] and navigate[d] the world around us” (Baronov, 2012, p. 114). Phenomenology helped create formative relations between who we were and how we acted (Van Manen, 2007) while providing insight into the meaning behind human actions (Baronov, 2012).

Research Philosophies Critiqued

In this study, structuralism would not be a pivotal philosophy to use due to the participants' individual growth and experience being the focus of the research. Structural barriers were present in the participants' lives, but there was a greater focus on the “immediate world around one” (Baronov, 2012, p. 85), which structuralist philosophers avoid. Studies that utilized a structural philosophy were more focused on data or a more quantitative approach. Quantitative data is essential in research, but the research questions in this study were more concentrated on gathering qualitative data.

This study utilized interviews to discover the lived experiences of participants, which was more hermeneutical. Descriptive or transcendental phenomenology was a great philosophy when the researcher wanted to emphasize a description of people's experiences (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Descriptive phenomenology in the empirical research explored protective factors (Williams et al., 2016) and reasoning behind experiences (Heberle et al., 2018). This study focused more on the contingent experiences of the participants, and how they related to other influences such as culture and other people that experienced a similar phenomenon (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). This made hermeneutic phenomenology a better choice than descriptive phenomenology.

When research questions were more aimed at discovering participants' experiences rather than the essence, hermeneutic phenomenology was better suited (Cross et al., 2018).

Statement of Research Philosophy

This study utilized hermeneutic phenomenology as the philosophy of research.

Justification of Research Philosophy

Hermeneutics was the best philosophy for this study just as it was for much of the empirical research reviewed. A space such as experiences growing up in poverty could not be tackled scientifically. This was not a study where numbers should be the focus. Instead, words should be the focus. Hermeneutics brought more voice from the participants and shared the participants' life experiences. When sharing life experiences, it was considered crucial to bring feeling and meaning to the study, and hermeneutics did that. The life experiences of growing up in poverty and how it affected a person in and out of school was of a sensitive nature, and therefore was more suited in an interview format where the participants felt safe and comfortable sharing experiences that could hopefully help others in the future.

This study wished to share the narratives of educators that grew up in poverty from their point of view. They shared their experiences in school and what factors influenced their careers. The focus shifted to the essential features of their experiences (Chemero & Kaufer, 2015). This study allowed educators the opportunity to reflect on their lived experiences and enabled the reader insight into their lived experiences (van Manen, 2007).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was “especially relevant to researchers in education” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 1297). This philosophy studied the “conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first-person point of view” (Smith, 2018).

Conscious experiences have a unique feature: we *experience* them, we live through them or perform them. Other things in the world, we may observe and engage, but we do not experience them, in the sense of living through or performing them. (Smith, 2018)

This conscious experience was phenomenological. Educators whose voices were often unheard shared their lived experiences as a low socioeconomic child in the school system and how that impacted their careers as teachers. The teacher's experience was phenomenological, and the “part of what it [was] for the experience to be” (Smith, 2018, p. 3) was ontological. The experience of the educator was a valuable tool for all levels of educators. Administrators and educators could learn critical factors that could improve the learning environment and the relationship formed with students of low socioeconomic backgrounds. Hermeneutics thinking then allowed us to interpret the experience by relating it to other relevant experiences in context (Smith, 2018). With a phenomenological perspective, multiple individuals' interpretations were considered valid (Newman & Ridenour, 2008).

Presentation of Research Philosophy

Hermeneutics was a philosophy influenced by phenomenology (Baronov, 2012, p. 114). Van Manen connected phenomenology and hermeneutics (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p.

1297). Hermeneutics had five common premises (Baronov, 2012, p. 132). (1) There was a “basic distinction between the physical and social sciences based on human subjectivity” (Baronov, 2012, p. 132). The social sciences focused more on individual subjectivity and realized that one’s interpretation of human subjectivity was compared to another’s interpretation of human subjectivity better known as probabilistic knowledge (Baronov, 2012). Rationalism then became a greater part of the justification of the interpretation (Baronov, 2012). (2) Hermeneutics constructed an understanding of human subjectivity instead of an explanation (Baronov, 2012). This philosophy studied various experiences such as perception, thought, emotion, desire, and imagination, as well as bodily awareness and social and linguistic activity (Smith, 2018). Phenomenology depicted how humans made sense of their life experiences, and this depiction impacted hermeneutics (Baronov, 2012). How parts related to wholes was a central component of hermeneutics (Baronov, 2012). (3) Interpretations within hermeneutics competed with other interpretations. The accuracy of an interpretation measured its truth and future interpretations “further develop[ed] our understanding” (Baronov, 2012, p. 135). (4) Assumptions about human nature shaped one’s interpretations (Baronov, 2012). The researcher “explicitly define[d] human nature prior to beginning work” (Baronov, 2012, p. 135). Two dangers stemmed from this: (a) the researcher’s vision of human nature would lead to a mechanical following; and (b) the researcher’s vision of human nature was based on an “arbitrary set of assumptions” that could not be defended (Baronov, 2012, p. 135). (5) Historical and cultural circumstances were central in shaping subjective meaning (Baronov, 2012). To truly understand a person’s story, it was essential to

“analyze the historical and cultural circumstances in which the author lived and identified the author's position in society” (Baronov, 2012, p. 112). The life world of a person “shape[d] their language of expression” (Baronov, 2012, p. 136). Their life world “determine[ed] what they know and how they explain[ed] what they [knew] (Baronov, 2012, p. 136).

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm was the framework for analyzing the data of the study (Sousa et al., 2007). There were three main research paradigms: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The research question was an essential component of the research study and led to the research paradigm (Newman & Ridenour, 2008). Different research types based on questions or hypotheses demanded different types of research designs (Sousa et al., 2007).

Major Research Paradigms

The empirical literature utilized qualitative research (Cross et al., 2018; Decuir-Gunby et al., 2010; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Hirschl et al., 2011; Parker & Craig, 2017; Walker et al., 2008), which was a more holistic and exploratory approach to understanding meaning (Newman & Ridenour, 2008). The empirical literature also utilized quantitative research (Banerjee, 2019; Berry et al., 2016; Comeau & Boyle, 2018; Cooper, 2010; Engler et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2005; Fall & Billingsley, 2011; Fernandez et al., 2017; Finn & Rock, 1997; Fry et al., 2017; Garrett-Peters et al., 2016; Hackman et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2015; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Ready & Chu, 2015; Ready & Wright, 2011; Scott et al., 2019; Wade et al., 2015; Weathers,

2019). Quantitative research utilized statistical analysis to analyze data collected (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The researcher tested a theory or hypothesis for “confirmation or disconfirmation” (Newman & Ridenour, 2008, p. 3). Mixed-methods was a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Newman & Ridenour, 2008). Few studies utilized a mixed-methods approach (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017; Fernandez et al., 2017; Robinson, 2007; Sun & Leithwood, 2015).

Critique of Research Paradigms

Quantitative research was not the paradigm of choice for this study since it was not interested in a statistical analysis of the data. Quantitative analysis was better suited for a structural approach to a study instead of a hermeneutic one. This study was more interested in experiences and narratives as opposed to statistics. Mixed-Method was a suitable paradigm for providing both qualitative and quantitative data to support the study. Since the subject of poverty was a personal and sensitive topic, the researcher chose to stay with a more personal approach to collecting data. Qualitative data through an interview was considered the more personal way to collect data.

Statement of Research Paradigm

The research paradigm that best fit this study was qualitative.

Justification of Research Paradigm

This qualitative research study sought to share the narratives of educators that grew up low socioeconomic. A qualitative research paradigm allowed the researcher to give voice to educators who grew up in poverty and share similarities and differences from their lives (Spyrou, 2013) to develop a better understanding of the impact of poverty

on their education and career choices. This research paradigm allowed the participants to express their experiences in their own words (Walker et al., 2008). Their words and experiences could lead to a greater understanding of the educators' perspectives (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2010) regarding the impact of poverty on academic achievement and how to improve students' educational climate. Since the research questions for this study intended to share these educators' experiences, qualitative research proved to be the best method (Cross et al., 2018).

Presentation of Research Paradigm

Qualitative research comes from the Latin word, *qualitas*, which focused more on the “qualities, features, of entities-to distinctions in kind” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 36). Qualitative research examined incidents within the cultural and social context by utilizing exploratory techniques such as surveys, interviews, or other personal techniques (Salkind, 2017). Qualitative research sought “to discover and to describe narratively what particular people [did] in their everyday lives and what their actions mean[t] to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 36).

Some central tenets of qualitative research included

(1) It [took] place in the natural world; (2) [drew] on multiple methods that respect[ed] the humanity of the participants in the study; (3) focus[ed] on context; (4) [was] emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured; and (5) [was] fundamentally interpretive. (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 2)

Qualitative research described people's everyday experiences narratively (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research was a “broad approach to the study of social

phenomenon,” which researchers chose in an “effort to understand—and perhaps change—a complex social phenomenon” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 3). The researcher followed some basic practices such as (1) holistically viewed the world; (2) engaged in reflection; (3) remained sensitive to their own social identities and how their identities shaped their studies; (4) used “complex reasoning that [was] multifaceted and iterative”; and (5) was systematic in conducting inquiries (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, pp. 2-3).

Qualitative research “consist[ed] of a set of interpretive, material practices that [made] the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10). These practices “transform[ed] the world” and “attempt[ed] to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people [brought] to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10). The “narratives of complex personal journeys” were best suited to a qualitative research paradigm (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) and could lead to a transformative impact (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Design

A case study was a typical qualitative research design when sharing experiences and perspectives about poverty (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2010; Ellison & Mays-Woods, 2019; Howard, 2008). Case Study research was based on six major assumptions. (1) A specific case was identified, described, and analyzed. Researchers typically analyzed a current case so that information was accurate and not lost in time. (2) A case study was “bounded, meaning that it [could] be defined or described within certain parameters” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 97). (3) A case study focused on something of unique interest that needed to be described or detailed, or it could provide a better understanding of a

“specific issue, problem, or concern” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 97). (4) Case studies utilized many forms of qualitative data. (5) In a case study, the findings were descriptive of the case and uncovered common themes or issues. (6) Finally, a case study often ended with a conclusion formed by the researcher brought about by the collection of multiple forms of qualitative data such as interview, observations, and document analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Another common qualitative research design used in the empirical literature was narrative inquiry (Houston, 2010; Parker, 2017; Parker & Craig, 2017). Narrative inquiry was both “phenomenon and methodology for understating experience” (Caine et al., 2018, p. 133). Jerome Bruner was one of the main contributors to “narrative inquiry as a legitimate form of generating knowledge in social science research” (Kim, 2016, p. 10).

Statement of Research Design

This study was a cross-sectional, descriptive, online case study that utilized narrative nonfiction as the research design.

Justification for Research Design

The focus of this study was to compile descriptive narratives of educators that grew up in poverty. Each individual educator was a case study. The narratives were gathered from online interviews. Narrative design was minimally used in the literature when discussing poverty (Parker, 2017; Parker & Craig, 2017). There is not much research that focused solely on educators who grew up in poverty and their experience from childhood to adulthood. The benefit of a life history design was that knowledge came from multiple time periods in a person’s life. This study was also cross-sectional

due to it being an observational study design that measured the “outcome and the exposures of the study participants” in one point of time (Setia, 2016, p. 261).

Presentation of Research Design

Bruner (2004) stated that narrative and life is “a two-way affair” since “narrative imitates life, [and] life imitates narrative” (Bruner, 2004, p. 692). Bruner (2004) also felt that the story of one’s own life was a “privileged but troubled narrative in the sense that it [was] reflexive” (p. 693). “Narrative inquiry require[d] a great deal of openness and trust between participant and researcher” and should include “mutual and sincere collaboration” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 157). Since a participant’s narrative was typically very personal to them, it was crucial as a researcher to listen with intent, develop a caring relationship, and give the narrator full voice (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Some key components of narrative research included

- Narrative researchers collect[ed] stories from individuals about individuals lived and told experiences.
- Narrative stories [told] of individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of individuals.
- Narrative stories occur[red] within specific places or situations.
- Narrative stories [were] gathered from many different forms of data.
- Narrative stories [were] analyzed in various ways; some include[d], thematically, structurally, or in a dialogic/performance way.

- The researcher shape[d] narrative stories into a chronology.
- Narrative stories often contain[ed] turning points. (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pp. 68-69)

There were three main genres of narrative research: autobiographical, biographical, and arts-based (Kim, 2016). This study was a biographical narrative that included life history or life story (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In a biographical narrative, the researcher wrote and recorded the experiences of another person's life (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim, 2016). Personal stories often "[brought] to light marginalized people's experiences, changing our perceptions of them" (Chase, 2018, p. 553).

Narrative inquiry as a research method often appealed to educators (Kim, 2016; Huber et al., 2013; Clandinin et al., 2007). It was grounded in educational philosophy (Kim, 2016). One theory in academic research was that humans were storytellers who "individually and socially [led] storied lives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquiry "embodie[d] theoretical ideas about the educational experience as lived and told stories" (Kim, 2016, p. 18). This form of investigation required attention to the quality and impact of narratives that focused on teachers' and teacher educators' practices that required a particular kind of wakefulness (Clandinin et al., 2007). Dewey (1938) emphasized that to study life and education was to study experience, and this experience was both personal and social. Narrative was the study of the way humans experienced the world, translating into a view that "education [was] the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories... Teachers and learners [were] storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Narrative inquiry

“made a transformative impact in education.” It has contributed to the “advancement of education research methods and methodology, curriculum, teaching and learning, and teacher education” (Kim, 2016, p. 19). Clandinin et al. (2007) spoke of the opportunity teachers, and teacher educators had to more fully understand

our school landscapes and ourselves as shaping and shaped by these landscapes, and thus, to shift our practices to teaching and learning, teachers and students, parents and families, and curriculum making. Perhaps we [could] even change school landscapes. (p. 38)

Narrative involved telling and knowing and a narrative mode of thinking which “use[d] stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences, the changes and challenges of life events, and the differences and complexity of people's actions” (Kim, 2016, pp. 6, 11). Similarly, narrative was “the phenomenon being studied,” and as a method, it began “with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 67). Narrative inquiry was one of the primary methods of research “by which human experience [was] made meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1988). “Experience [was] meaningful, and human behavior [was] generated and informed by this meaningfulness (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1).

Each individual participant in the study was a case. Case study research provided the opportunity to define the research space of interest and the flexibility to offer multiple perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The case was the object of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), in this case the teacher. The intent behind studying teachers as cases was to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific problem or concern (in this case,

poverty in education) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The narratives from each case were also descriptive. A descriptive study “document[ed] and describe[d] the phenomenon of interest” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 78).

This design was also cross-sectional where interview data were gathered from the participants at one point in time (Setia, 2016) through a series of two interviews within 7 days of each other.

The narratives were gathered through an online videoconferencing platform, Zoom (Archibald et al., 2019). The interviews were synchronous, allowing the researcher and the participant a real-time interaction. Zoom interviews made reaching participants easier. Zoom securely recorded and stored interview sessions without utilizing third-party software, which was vital to securing sensitive data gathered from interviewees. Zoom provided real time access to interviewees by laptop, phone, or tablet.

Research Method

Major research methods used throughout the empirical literature included surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews. Surveys (Banerjee, 2019; Boxer et al., 2011; Carothers et al., 2019; Finn & Rock, 1997; Hopson & Lee, 2011; Hoti et al., 2019; Leithwood et al., 2010; Tucker et al., 2018) and questionnaires (Hoti et al., 2019; Tucker et al., 2018) were a primary research method in quantitative studies. Focus groups were utilized in some of the qualitative studies (Cross et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2017). Focus groups were also often combined with interviews for the method of research (Sime & Sheridan, 2014; Spyrou, 2013; Walker et al., 2008). Focus groups were more than group interviewing but were instead considered dialogic events in which researchers and

research participants “collectively interrogate[d] the conditions of their lives to promote transformation” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 694). The focus groups often involved parents and students about social exclusion resulting from poverty (Walker et al., 2008; Spyrou, 2013) and barriers to academic success (Cross et al., 2018; Sime & Sheridan, 2014).

Interview was a prominent research method found in the qualitative literature (Ali et al., 2018; Heberle et al., 2018; Kraft et al., 2015; McAuley, 2019; Percy, 2003; Trzcinski, 2002; Weinger, 2000; Williams et al., 2017). Interview was one of the most common research methods in the human and social sciences and was widely used in the field of education (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The qualitative interview “attempt[ed] to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view” and to “unfold meaning of their experience” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3). Many qualitative studies have used interview to gain an understanding of the experiences of poverty from the perspective of low-socioeconomic children (Heberle et al., 2019; Neuspiel, & Carter, 2018; Spyrou, 2013; Trzcinski, 2002; Walker et al., 2008; Weinger, 2000, Williams et al., 2016). Teachers were interviewed in qualitative studies about topics such as parent engagement (Sime & Sheridan, 2014), how to have conversations about poverty with students (Nenadal & Mistry, 2018), and teacher supports needed in high poverty schools (Kraft et al., 2015).

Critique of Research Methods

Due to the nature of the research questions and the research design, surveys and questionnaires were not suitable for this study. This study investigated individual stories

as told by the participants rather than group perceptions. Poverty experiences were a sensitive topic and participants often wanted to discuss these experiences in private. Therefore, forming a focus group was not ideal. Interview was instead best suited for revealing life histories. This study was also interested in a qualitative research paradigm instead of a quantitative one, and interviews were suitable for a qualitative paradigm.

Statement of Research Method

This research study utilized online interviews to discover the life experiences, in and out of school, of six successful educators that grew up in poverty.

Justification of the Research Method

These narratives were collected through three online/virtual interviews to ensure saturation of the data. Virtual meetings were not utilized anywhere in the empirical research. The six participants represented a vulnerable population due to the nature of the research questions, about their life experiences living in/within poverty. Interview research was selected because it was the best method for the research design and research questions. Interviews were a more personal way of collecting data, especially from a vulnerable population. Interview research was commonly used throughout the literature to share personal accounts of life experiences from participants.

Interview Research. Interviewing was “an active process where interviewer and interviewee through their relationship produce[d] knowledge” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 21). Interviews provided an avenue for the researcher “to learn about the world of others” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 239). With interview as the method for obtaining data, the researcher was on a journey to learn about others’ “experiences, feelings, attitudes,

and the world they live[d] in” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 1). The qualitative interview “attempt[ed] to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view” and to “unfold meaning of their experience” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3). Interviewing was “an active process where interviewer and interviewee through their relationship produce[d] knowledge” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 21).

Best Practices in Interviewing. A well-crafted interview was a form of art if carried out well (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). It was crucial that the interview process was not spontaneous and was instead thought out to produce worthwhile information about a topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The research interest determined the focus of the interview. The decisions about the research interest required the interviewer to “be knowledgeable about the interview topic and familiar with the methodological options available, as well as have an understanding of the conceptual issues of producing knowledge through conversation” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 19). Intensive listening and notetaking as well as careful planning and preparation were a must (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 239).

The interview knowledge should be produced in a “conversational relation; it [was] contextual, linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 21). Some main tasks of a qualitative interview included framing your research questions around the type of knowledge you sought to discover from the analysis of the data, choosing the type of interview, defining your sample and recruiting participants, and developing an interview guide with necessary probes and prompts (King et al., 2019). It was also essential for the interviewer to maintain the conversation flow by not

interrupting or prematurely terminating a narrative by the interviewee, all while knowing when to probe for more and when to focus the interview (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interview needed to be conversational. Yet it needed to “involve a specific approach and technique of questioning” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 27). The interviewer needed to maintain a positive relationship with the interviewee by avoiding any interviewer bias or judgmental opinions apparent by non-verbal or verbal cues (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The interview location should be based on more than just convenience or comfort, but also the ability to gather necessary data (Herzog, 2012). The interviewer needed to establish rapport with a short introduction and a brief explanation of the purpose of the interview before the main interview took place (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interviewee should feel comfortable with the researcher because the interviewee will decide how much access to grant the researcher to his/her knowledge and experience (Cook, 2012).

The interviewer should also be a good listener. Listening is a “constructive/interpretive practice that shape[d] the content of the research interview, particularly in the context of in-depth and narrative interviews” (Talmage, 2012, p. 295). It was considered vital for the interviewer as a listener to clarify what the interviewee has said and to facilitate “linkages between the evolving narrative of the respondent and the different meanings and events that the respondent ha[d] previously articulated” (Talmage, 2012, p. 296). The interviewer needed to act as an active listener while actively collaborating with the interviewee (Talmage, 2012).

The interviewer should avoid asking research questions that established a causal relationship or generalized behavior pattern instead of focusing on looking for meaning

and experience from the participants (King et al., 2019). The interviewer should also avoid presumptions that could alter the direction of the interviewee's responses (King et al., 2019). The interviewee needed to trust the researcher with his/her vulnerabilities. The researcher must respect the interviewee's story and tell it as the interviewee wished it to be told (Atkinson, 2012). The interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon could be part of the conversation throughout the interview to ensure the interviewer and interviewee were of the same understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The interview's quality was based on the "strength and value of the knowledge produced" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Interviewing Vulnerable Populations. Vulnerable groups "may hold a social status that diminish[ed] their autonomy and marginalize[d] their lives" (Dempsey et al., 2016). Vulnerability should be a prime concern when considering the context of an interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Some research topics were likely to elicit more distress and harm than others (Dempsey et al., 2016). Sensitive issues were those "that cause[d] harm to participants, eliciting powerful emotional responses such as anger, sadness, embarrassment, fear and anxiety" (Elmir et al., 2011). A vulnerable participant may be included in the research process if the "well-being of the majority might be served by their inclusion" (King et al., 2019).

Best practices in interviewing vulnerable populations. When interviewing a vulnerable population, strategies, such as "building rapport, reciprocity, appropriate and sensitive use of open questions, self-disclosure, ensuring a comfortable environment, and appropriate timing" could prove beneficial (Elmir et al., 2011). Vulnerable participants

should participate voluntarily with adequate information about the research and about possible consequences that may result from participating (King et al., 2019). Rapport and relationship building were important. A mutually trusting relationship facilitated discussion on sensitive topics (Dempsey et al., 2016). Sometimes, sharing life experiences with a caring and attentive listener promoted closure and proved therapeutic for participants (Elmir et al., 2011). The participant might be negatively affected by the interview process, and a plan for dealing with this should be put in place (Dempsey et al., 2016).

A semi-structured or open-ended questioning format was preferred when interviewing vulnerable populations (Elmir et al., 2011). Semi-structured interviews made “better use of the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues by allowing much more leeway for following up on whatever angles [were] deemed important by the interviewer” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The researcher should be an active listener and be attuned to the participants’ needs (Dempsey et al., 2016). Probes, at times, would be necessary to elicit more information from the interviewee. Nondirective probes worked best to redirect the conversation in a natural way, delivering more authentic information (Dempsey et al., 2016).

Gatekeepers were people that could permit access to participants for a study (Dempsey et al., 2016). Sometimes gatekeepers were necessary for reaching vulnerable populations. The gatekeeper’s utmost responsibility was to protect individuals in their care. They could as such deny access to a researcher that they had not developed a trusting relationship with (Dempsey et al., 2016).

When interviewing a vulnerable population, time and place were important. The site should be private and free from interruptions (Dempsey et al., 2016; Elmir et al., 2011). It was also important the vulnerable participant felt comfortable. Many in fact opt to be interviewed from home (Dempsey et al., 2016; Elmir et al., 2011).

The online interview. There were many distance formats for interviewing: chat room, email, and telephone (Gilham, 2005). An online interview through videoconferencing was another possibility. The use of videoconferencing increased in use for qualitative research (Irani, 2019). Online interviews made interviewing people far away possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Skype (Janghorban et al., 2014) or Zoom (Archibald et al., 2019) were some formats for online interviewing.

Online interview overcame “time and financial constraints, geographical dispersion, and physical mobility boundaries, which [had] adversely affected onsite interviews” (Janghorban et al., 2014). Online interviews could still be a synchronous (real-time) interviews and allowed the interview to occur in a convenient location for the interviewee (Janghorban et al., 2014). Interview through online videoconferencing was “a viable alternative to in-person interviews” (Irani, 2019, p. 4). Internet access and knowledgeable about the use of electronic devices were considered to be more widespread (O’Connor & Madge, 2001).

The cyber world provided a virtual arena where researchers could interact with participants that may not have been possible in a face-to-face setting (O’Connor & Madge, 2001). Online methods of interviewing, when synchronous, could approximate that of a traditional face-to-face method of an interview (Archibald et al., 2019;

O'Connor & Madge, 2019). Online methods could be a better choice due to the flexibility and convenience they provided (Archibald et al., 2019). They also allowed for a verbal and visual recording of the interview (Salmons, 2015).

Zoom interview made reaching participants easier. Zoom was considered a video conferencing platform (Archibald et al., 2019). Zoom securely recorded and stored interview sessions without utilizing third-party software, which was vital to securing sensitive data gathered from interviewees. Zoom also provided real time access to interviewees by laptop, phone, or tablet.

Best practices for online interviewing.

- Determine which video conferencing tool was best for the researcher and participant use.
- Confirm with the institutional review board that this video conferencing tool could be utilized for qualitative research and about the guidelines that were needed for recording the interview and obtaining informed consent.
- Familiarize yourself with the videoconferencing tool so you could troubleshoot any technical problems that occurred.
- Based on the participant's comfort level with the video conferencing tool, you may want to set up a practice round to discuss the informed consent and collect demographic information.
- Send a reminder email to the participants with the required information to join the videoconference meeting.

- Dress as you would for a face-to-face interview.
- Choose a private, quiet space to conduct the interview and be sure your videoconference background was appropriate.
- Keep the camera at eye level and look at the camera when listening and asking questions to maintain eye contact with the participant.
- Avoid any other tasks during the interview to be fully present and attentive (Irani, 2019).

Ethical issues in interviewing. Ethical practices in research were both complex and demanding (King et al., 2019). There were many ethical considerations that, when catered to, prevented a “lack of awareness and/or proper procedures designed to establish mutual understanding and trust” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 252). There were four main ethical guidelines researchers needed to consider when interviewing participants: informed consent, confidentiality, consequences, and the role of the researcher (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 91).

Informed consent required informing the participants of “the overall purpose of the investigation and the main focus of the design, as well as of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 93). Informed consent also required written approval from the interviewee while knowing they had the right to withdraw from the research study at any time (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The confidentiality agreement meant that any identifiable information about the participants would not be disclosed. If any information could be potentially identifiable,

the interviewee would have to consent to its disclosure (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Qu & Dumay, 2011). When considering the possible consequences of a study, it was essential to note that the study's benefits should outweigh the risk of harm (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; King et al., 2019). Interviewees should be informed of any possible harm that could occur, and the data gathered should not be used to harm the interviewee (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Participants should have access to appropriate supports if needed (Dempsey et al., 2016). A research review board would consider "the costs and benefits of the research to ensure the interviewee [would] not suffer harm" (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 252).

The fourth ethical consideration involved the role of the researcher. The researcher decided how much of the study's intent should be disclosed before the interview, in order to not cloud the interviewee's response (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The researcher published findings that were as "accurate and representative of the field of inquiry as possible" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Member checking by sharing data and interpretations with the participants was important to ensure the data's accuracy (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). It was crucial for the researcher to be transparent throughout the data collecting and analysis process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The researcher needed to show respect and proper representation when transcribing and translating others' words (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A debriefing should occur after the interview to put "closure to the experience" (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 253). These decisions were crucial to the study's integrity and quality (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Ethics of the online interview. The same ethical considerations were relevant to online or face-to-face interview methods. Online interview also required consideration of four main matters: “consent, identity, privacy, and protection of data” (Salmons, 2015). In addition, participants would need to consent to the research through a recorded verbal consent (Salmons, 2015) or a signed written consent sent through email, which was usually preferred (Janghorban et al., 2014). This consent form could be reviewed in a videoconference interview, telephone call, or email prior to the formal interview (Irani, 2019). The participants should have a chance to ask questions or express concerns about the study before it begins (Salmons, 2015). All participants needed to be aware of the audio or video recording (Janghorban et al., 2014). The video or audio recordings must be securely stored (Archibald et al., 2019). Participants should know that they can withdraw from the interview at any time by simply logging off from the virtual platform (Janghorban et al., 2014).

Provisions of Trustworthiness in Interviewing. This narrative nonfiction study portrayed six educators’ lived experiences that grew up in poverty, and that despite risk factors obtained an educational degree. A narrative research study shared “the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell & Clark, 2018, p. 67). Narrative inquiry was mostly criticized for “its focus on the individual rather than the social context... however, narrative inquiry [sought] to understand sociological questions about groups, communities, and contexts through individuals’ lived experiences” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 157). Dewey (1938) stated that the social factors “operate[d] in the constitution of individual experience” (p. 21), and every

experience influenced “the objective conditions under which further experiences [were had]” (p. 37). Dewey (1938) further stated, “All human experience [was] ultimately social” (p. 38).

The researcher rendered a reliable portrayal of the educators’ lived experiences of growing up in poverty and their choice to become educators, as told narratively from information gathered in semi-structured interviews. According to Polkinghorne (1988), a test of such results was when other researchers could produce the same results from the same data the results were drawn from (p. 177).

The researcher built a trusting, ethical relationship with participants and respected each participants’ “dignity and welfare” by honoring their anonymity throughout and even after the research process (Kim, 2016, p. 103). The researcher attempted to stay within the participant’s vernacular, so his/her voice could be heard (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) and collaborated with the participants in trying to understand their experiences and stories, involving them in the “research project to validate themes, interpretations, and findings” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 48). Fidelity was a “criterion for practicing and evaluating narrative inquiry” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p. 25). Unlike truth, fidelity was what a situation “mean[t] to the teller of the tale.” It was not only what happened in a situation, as in truth, but also “what happened for that person” (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, p. 26).

The researcher declared this study to be trustworthy because the participants were the main focus, data were member checked, the researcher engaged in reflexivity, and the researcher collaborated throughout the project with the participants (Marshall &

Rossmann, 2016, pp. 46-47). Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) spoke to a “triangular relationship,” a situational meaning “through interactions between (a) the teller of the tale, (b) the narrative and its objects, and (c) the receiver of the narrative.” This ethical and trustworthy relationship between researcher and participant focused on the tale and its significance, and the participant agreed in the end on the “quality of the fidelity in the new image” (p. 27).

Research Instrument

The interview took place at a convenient time and date, and a convenient place for the interviewee. The interview took place in zoom, a video-conferencing platform that allowed the researcher to record the interview’s visual and audio components. Since the interview took place in zoom, the interviewee chose a place with minimal distractions and appropriate WIFI for a good connection.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the conversational structure to be flexible enough that the interviewee could raise questions or concerns from their perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 579). The questions only guided the conversation, but the conversation was not limited to the questions (Kim, 2016, p. 163). Semi-structured interviews “allow[ed] much more leeway for following up on whatever angles [were] deemed important by the interviewee, and the interviewer [had] a greater chance of becoming visible as a knowledge-producing participant in the process itself” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 579). Semi-structured interview was an “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 6).

The researcher went into this interview as a knowledge seeker acknowledging that the interviewee was the knowledge holder, therefore approaching this process as an honor to understand the interviewee's world from his/her point of view (Kim, 2016, p. 158). A core component of the interview protocol was ensuring that the questions were easy for the participant to understand (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once the researcher received a signed consent as well as the prescreening questionnaire, she arranged a date and time for the first interview with all participants that met the criteria. The interview began with some ice breaker questions to help relax the interviewee before the interview began and the interview ended with the researcher thanking the interviewee for his/her time and participation, as well as discussing a possible future interview date if needed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher selected the order of the interview questions in such a way that ice breaker questions were at the beginning, followed by questions about their students, and then last questions about themselves, in hopes of building a rapport before they had to discuss their personal lives. The interviewee was reminded again that all information would remain confidential by using pseudonyms (Kim, 2016).

Interview I

Introductory Questions

1. Could you please talk a little about yourself?
2. How would you describe poverty in the United States?
3. What do you think are this poverty's adverse effects?
4. How do you think we as a culture should combat poverty?
5. How would you describe K-12 education in the United States?

6. What do you think are pros and cons of such an education?
7. How do you think we can make this education exemplary?
8. How do you describe the relationship between poverty and k-12 education in the United States?
9. How do you think we can make this relationship exemplary?

Research Question 1: How do successful educators who grew up in poverty understand the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?

Research question 2: How do successful educators who grew up in poverty improve the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?

10. Could you please describe an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?
11. Could you please describe the out-of-school challenges economically disadvantaged K-12 students face?
12. Could you please describe the in-school challenges economically disadvantaged K-12 students face?

XXXXX: by the order below (12 metrics with $12 \times 4 = 48$ questions) (see Table 1).

- a. Could you please describe the XXXXX challenges you think economically disadvantaged K-12 students face?
- b. How do you help these students overcome these XXXXX challenges?
- c. What do you think the k-12 education system should do to better support these students overcome these XXXXX challenges?

d. What coping mechanisms have you witnessed students, their families, and their communities using to overcome these XXXXX challenges?

Table 1

The Eleven Dimensions (Students)

1	Social & Historical	4	Ethnic & Racial	7	Educational: Teachers, Peers, Administrators, & Wider School Culture	10	Psychological/ Emotional
2	Financial & Economical	5	Academic & Cognitive	8	Family: Parents, Siblings, Wider Family	11	Physical Health
3	Political (Policy & Legal)	6	School Behavioral	9	Friends/Neighborhood/ Community		

Note. Each dimension replaced the XXXXX in the interview questions regarding their students.

Interview II

Research question 3: What were the childhood experiences of successful educators who grew up in poverty? What cultural and social obstacles did they face? How were such obstacles overcome?

Research question 4: What were the K-12 educational experiences of successful educators that grew up in poverty? What obstacles did they face in school? How were such obstacles negotiated?

1. Could you please describe yourself as an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?

2. Could you please describe the out-of-school challenges you have faced as an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?
3. Could you please describe the in-school challenges you have faced as an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?

XXXXX: by the order below (12 metrics with $12 \times 4 = 48$ questions) (see Table 2).

- a. Could you please describe the XXXXX challenges you have faced as economically disadvantaged K-12 student?
- b. How did you cope with these XXXXX challenges?
- c. Who else helped you cope with these XXXXX challenges? How?

Table 2

The Eleven Dimensions (Educators)

1	Social & Historical	4	Ethnic & Racial	7	Educational: Teachers, Peers, Administrators, & Wider School Culture	10	Psychological/Emotional
2	Financial & Economical	5	Academic & Cognitive	8	Family: Parents, Siblings, Wider Family	11	Physical Health
3	Political (Policy & Legal)	6	School Behavioral	9	Friends/Neighborhood/Community		

Note. Each dimension replaced the XXXXX in the interview questions about the educators.

Research question 5: Why do successful educators who grew up in poverty decide to pursue an education degree and career?

1. Why did you decide to pursue an education-related degree?
2. Why did you decide to pursue a K-12 education career?
3. Do you think an educator should have experienced poverty in order to be able to best support an economically disadvantaged K-12 student? Could you please elaborate?

Interview III

The follow up questions were designed based on the responses to questions during interview I and II. Participants were given the chance to member-check.

Sampling, Samples, and Unit of Analysis

This section will discuss the sampling process.

Sampling Techniques

This study utilized two levels of sampling. The first was nonprobability purposeful and it was used in selecting the school districts/schools. The second was a nonprobability, maximum variation, purposeful sampling technique and it was used in the selection of the actual teachers.

Justification of sampling technique. The sample needed to be purposeful due to the nature of the study. The participants needed to fit the criteria of being successful educators that grew up in poverty. Maximum variation was necessary for the sample to ensure that the participants varied. A diverse sample was vital in producing different

perspectives. The researcher did not want all the participants to be the same gender, race, or even teach the same grade-level.

Presentation of sampling technique. A sample was defined as “a group of people, objects, or items taken from a larger population for measurement” (Bhardwaj, 2019, p. 158). A nonprobability sample was a type of sample where all members of the population did not have an equal probability of being selected for the sample (Bhardwaj, 2019). The sample was purposive. The sample members were chosen “because they [could] purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). The sample of this study was also one of maximum variation. A maximum variation sample was a popular approach to qualitative research when the researcher wanted a diverse group in which to identify “important common patterns” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 115). The “researcher maximize[d] differences at the beginning of the study,” which “increase[d] the likelihood that the findings [would] reflect differences or different perspectives” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158).

Sample

The school districts/schools were in Texas and were public. They were also urban or rural and were title one.

The study utilized a nonprobability, maximum variation, purposeful sample to locate six educators. The educators had to meet specific criteria to be part of the study. (1) The educator had to have grown up in poverty. (2) The educator had to work in a public-school system. (3) The public school had to be at minimal a title-one school

representing a high percentage of low-income students. (4) The public school had to be in Texas. (5) The educator had to be a successful classroom teacher in the respective high poverty school.

Some exclusion criteria were also used. (1) The educator did not grow up in poverty at some point in his/her K-12 educational experience. (2) The educator did not work at a low socioeconomic school system in Texas. (3) The educator was not considered a successful educator working in the respective high poverty school. (4) The educator did not add to creating a diverse sample within the study. The study was looking for a diverse sample of educators with at least five successful years of experience working with poverty students. The participants differed by ethnicity (African American, Hispanic, and White), gender (male and female educators), geography (urban and rural school districts in Texas), and grade level (elementary, middle, and high school).

Unit of Observation and Analysis

A unit of analysis was defined as “the level of inquiry on which the study [would] focus” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 78). The unit of analysis for a life history was based on individual lived experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). A unit of observation was defined as what you observe, collect, or measure while learning about your unit of analysis (DeCarlo, 2018).

Presentation of major units of observation and analysis. Some major units of observation and analysis in the literature were school administrators (McKinney, 2014; Rasmussen, 2015; Smith, 2014), children raised in poverty (Ansari et al., 2017; Boxer et al., 2011; Comeau & Boyle, 2018; Finn & Rock, 1997; Heberle et al., 2018; Herbers et

al., 2012; Hopson & Lee, 2011; McAuley, 2019; Spyrou, 2013; Tucker et al., 2018; Walker et al., 2008; & Williams et al., 2017), parents of children in poverty (Mazza et al., 2016; Najman et al., 2009), as well as parents and their children (Berry et al., 2016; Sime & Sheridan, 2014; Trzcinski, 2002). Two studies compared perceptions of school barriers to children in and out of poverty (Cross et al., 2018; Weinger, 2000). Teachers that worked with high poverty students were also evident in the research as a unit of analysis and observation (Nenadel & Mistry, 2018; Ready & Chu, 2015; Whipp & Geronime, 2017). Many studies had more than one unit of analysis and observation: teacher and administrators (Kraft et al., 2015; Leithwood et al., 2010), teachers and students (Hoti et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2019), and teacher, parents, students, and administrators (Banerjee, 2019; Cooper, 2010).

Critique of units of observation and analysis. Parents, students, administrators, and teachers all had an important voice when discussing the academic, behavioral, and social effects of poverty. The empirical literature was more saturated with data from parents of low socioeconomic students, administrators who worked in high poverty schools, and low socioeconomic students expressing barriers and life experiences. There was less empirical literature from teachers that also grew up low socioeconomic, so this study focused on teachers that grew up low socioeconomic.

Statement of the unit of observation and analysis. The unit of observation and analysis for this study was the educator that grew up low socioeconomic.

Justification for the unit of observation and analysis. Teachers served as “first responders’ in identifying students who need[ed] additional instructional support”

(National Education Association, 2019b, p. 1). Instead of reaching out to gather narratives from educators, much of the research instead sought knowledge from administrators (Hopson & Lee, 2011; McKinney, 2014; Rasmussen, 2015; Smith, 2014). Though administrators were essential in leading success for economically disadvantaged students, research showed the benefits in students' academic and behavioral success based on support from educators (Dietrichson et al., 2017; Gamoran et al., 2012; Hebert, 2018; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Turner & Juntune, 2018). Yet, the teacher's voice was limited in use when discussing how to achieve this success. Even less seldom used was the voice of teachers that grew up low socioeconomic.

This study took place in Texas where 1 in 4 children lived in poverty (Lee et al., 2016). Texas showed a higher percentage of children living in poverty (24%) and low income (48%) than the national average (19% and 40%, respectively) (NCCP, 2018b).

By breaking away from a focus on administrators or educators that did not grow up economically disadvantaged, as seen in much of the literature, a new perspective was generated. This study utilized a purposeful sample to ensure that all participants were successful educators who grew up in poverty and were now teaching a population of children who grew up in poverty.

Much of the literature addressed the benefits of racial matching between student and teacher (Banerjee, 2018; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Redding, 2019; Yarnell & Bohrnstedt, 2018). Many studies even focused on minorities only due to the high level of poverty found in African American and Hispanic populations (Ali et al., 2018; Anasari et al., 2017; Dearing et al., 2016; Howard, 2008; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Percy, 2010).

This study provided data from a mix of white, African American, and Hispanic educators since poverty was prevalent in all three races. The researcher was also a white educator that grew up in poverty.

Method of Analysis of Findings

Interpretive issues could arise when memories recollected in interview conversations were transformed into text by the researcher (Riessman, 2008). The first step to analyzing data was by creating accurate transcripts from the interview sessions—the researcher utilized Nvivo Transcription Services to transcribe the Zoom interview audio files. The researcher listened to the audio file while checking the Nvivo transcriptions for accuracy and made corrections where necessary. The researcher sent the transcripts to each participant for member checking. Member checking verified the accuracy of the data before the researcher further analyzed the data.

There is no one best method to analyze qualitative data. The research questions and the answers you seek would influence the coding choices you make (Saldana, 2016). Ontological questions suggested “the exploration of personal, interpretive meanings found within the data” (Saldana, 2016, p. 71). Epistemological questions offered “the exploration of participant actions/processes and perceptions found within the data” (Saldana, 2016, p. 71). The “paradigm or theoretical approach to the study” also determined the coding decisions (Saldana, 2016, p. 71).

Analysis of narrative was “designed to compare and contrast various narratives, identify key themes, and/or explore narratives through a theoretical lens” (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 12).

Coding/Thematic Analysis

The second step in Narrative data analysis was to generate codes from the data. Narrative data analysis and interpretation worked in tandem to find narrative meaning. “Narrative analysis [was] based on a paradigmatic view of the world” (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 12). The researcher coded the field texts to research texts (Kim, 2016). The field texts were the texts from the questions asked, and research texts came from analyzing the field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To explore six educators’ narratives, the researcher followed three steps as laid out by Miles et al., (2020): data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

Data condensation was the process of selecting and focusing the data from the interview transcripts (Miles et al., 2020). Data condensation was a continuous process throughout the project and was a part of the analysis “that sharpen[ed], focus[ed], discard[ed], and organize[d] data so that ‘final’ conclusions [could] be drawn and verified” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 8). The researcher spent “many hours reading and rereading field texts to construct a chronicled or summarized account of what [was] contained within different sets of field texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131). The researcher performed a line by line analysis to create code categories (Kim, 2016). This step known as burrowing, required a thorough investigation of “the specific details of the data” (Kim, 2016, p. 207).

The next step, data display, was “an organized, condensed assembly of information that allow[ed] analytic reflection and action” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 8). This part of the analysis assembled the information to make it more accessible so the analyst

could see “what [was] happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 9). The researcher grouped data according to similarities and differences.

Then the researcher drew and verified conclusions (Miles et al., 2020). The analyst noted patterns, explanations, and causal flows (Miles et al., 2020). The analyst coded the data and clustered the codes by commonalities (Miles et al., 2010). This grouped data was named or labeled to summarize best the data (Sharp et al., 2018). The researcher created a graphic organizer to organize the codes.

The third step of narrative analysis was to organize the codes created from the data into themes (Miles et al., 2010). The researcher grouped related codes into themes (Sharp et al., 2018). The researcher utilized Polkinghorne’s (1995) analysis of narratives, based on Bruner’s (1986) paradigmatic cognition, to locate themes that were common across all stories (Kim, 2016). The “goal of analysis [was] to uncover the common themes or plots in the data,” utilizing “hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177).

The hermeneutic circle moved from the original data (the transcripts) to the emerging descriptive patterns (Polkinghorne, 1988). While composing the research text, the researcher “look[ed] for the patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132). This approach was called an inductive analysis (Sharp et al., 2018). With inductive analysis, categories and themes were derived straight from comparisons found in the data (Sharp et al., 2018). Deductive analysis, “exploring data for examples of theoretical concepts,” also

occurred (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 13). With deductive analysis, the theory was utilized as a “conceptual framework to examine the data” with “the participants’ experiences being investigated” (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 14).

Deductive and inductive coding was completed concurrently (Sharp et al., 2018). Once the themes were produced, the researcher then analyzed the themes for a coherent pattern. The researcher organized the themes around the codes used to create them within the graphic organizer. This process of mapping the themes from the codes allowed the researcher to begin constructing the narratives.

Narrative Construction

Narrative-type inquiry “gather[ed] events and happenings as its data and use[d] narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). The data represented the lived experiences from the participants’ point of view from the codes and themes developed from the interview questions (Kim, 2016). The researcher paid attention to “the participants’ feelings, understandings, dilemmas, or a certain event’s impact on the participants or the surroundings” (Kim, 2016, p. 207). Storying and restorying were utilized after burrowing the data. Storying and restorying brought the lived experience of the participant to the forefront (Kim, 2016). Polkinghorne (1995) thought “stories express[ed] a kind of knowledge that uniquely describe[d] human experience in which actions and happenings contribute[d] positively and negatively to attaining goals and fulfilling purposes” (p. 8). The researcher created a narrative by selecting “numerous direct quotes in the participants’ voices, offering a depth that is

unequaled by other forms of data analysis” (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 15). Each of the participants' stories were “told as a stand-alone story” (Sharp et al. 2018, p. 15).

Comparing Narratives

The researcher inspected the six stories created by the interviewees to look for “common notions that appeared across them” (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 13). The researcher analyzed these commonalities and differences for a broader understanding. The outcome of the “deductive and inductive analysis of narratives [were] then presented” with multiple “direct quotes from participants used to highlight the themes and to compare and contrast the participants' experiences” (Sharp et al., 2018, p. 15). The participants narratives were shared utilizing the structural/ecological framework of this study and compared across participant school type, ethnicity, gender, and grade-level taught.

Research Procedures

The following steps explained the research procedures that were followed in this study. They are placed in chronological order below. All emails were sent and received using the student's institutional email address.

I. Applied for and secured IRB approval through Stephen F. Austin State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee. All steps below were taken after securing IRB approval.

II. Recruitment of Participants:

- 1.** An email A was sent to school principals/superintendents of a number of public, title one schools/school districts in Texas non-randomly and conveniently selected (see Appendix A). The email explained the purpose of the research and the role of

the principals/superintendents as recruiters of teachers. Attached to the email was the approval form that school principals/superintendents needed to complete if interested in participating. A reminder email B was sent one week after email A was sent.

2. The day after the second week email A was sent, and upon receipt of the approval forms, the school principals/superintendents who agreed to participate received another email C with information that they needed to pass to their potentially recruited teachers. The information included the following: (a) details about the purpose of the research and the role of and expectations from the teacher; (b) a link to a Qualtrics survey (see Appendix B) that the teachers needed to complete if interested in participating. The Qualtrics survey included the consent form to be signed and a variety of demographic questions (see Appendix C). A reminder email D was sent one week after email C was sent.
3. The day after the fourth week email A was sent, the student and the dissertation chair had a meeting to cross compare the potential participants' demographics and a maximum variation sample if six participants was selected that maximizes demographic differences between the participants.
4. During the same day mentioned under (3.), the potential participants who were not selected were sent a thank you email E.
5. During the same day mentioned under (3.), the selected participants were sent a thank you email F. The email detailed next steps, including steps for scheduling the interviews.

III. Interviews:

6. During the week after the fourth week email A was sent, the three interviews were scheduled with and for each participant via email. Upon completion of the schedule, the participants received details about how to access Zoom and about the Zoom links (email G).
7. Starting the sixth week since email A was sent, the 90 minutes Zoom interviews (see Appendix D) took place. (It was assumed the interviews would take 90 minutes. Instead they took 2 ½ - 3 hours depending on the participant). The Zoom interviews were audio recorded. One month was given to conduct the three interviews for each participant, and for all participants. No two interviews for same participant were separated by more than a week. The participants selected Zoom interview times and days at their convenience (Most of the participants scheduled the Zoom meeting on the weekends or during the Christmas break since they were school teachers). Two days before each Zoom interview, the participants were reminded via email of the upcoming zoom meetings. The interviews were Zoom audio recorded to the cloud.

IV. Analysis:

8. The interviews were transcribed utilizing Nvivo software. The researcher thoroughly reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. The transcripts were then shared with the participants for member checking.
9. The findings from any previous interview guided the structure/content of questions for a later one.

10. Data were analyzed as described earlier in this chapter. Data were manually coded.

V. Protection of Data:

11. All soft copy files (e.g. transcriptions, mp3 files, email communications, questionnaires, and coding materials) were stored on the researcher's password protected personal computer and using password protected files.

12. Any hard copies of any of the files under (11.) were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office.

13. All soft copies and hard copies will be destroyed exactly five years after completing this study.

The Role of Researcher

The qualitative researcher was an instrument utilized in the study to collect the data and examine the significance of the life experiences of educators that grew up in poverty. The qualitative researcher hoped to understand and perhaps change a complex social phenomenon (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 3). The researcher wished to make the world of these participants visible through semi-structured interviews attempting to “make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10). The researcher as bricoleur understood “that research [was] an interactive process shaped by one's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity of the people in the setting (pp. 11-12). As referenced by Dewey (1938), “all general education comes about through experience” but all experiences are not equally educative. Some experiences were mis educative and distort “the growth of

further experience” (p. 25). “Individuals live in a world,” which means they “live in a series of situations” or experiences, and all these experiences were ultimately social (p. 43). The researcher sought to draw themes from the educational and life experiences of the participants.

Creswell and Poth (2018) expressed a need for the researcher’s bias to be clarified and for the researcher to engage in reflexivity. Therefore, the researcher “disclose[d] their understandings about the biases, values, and experiences that he or she [brought] to a qualitative research study” (p. 261). To clarify any past experiences or biases that have shaped the researcher’s interpretations and/or approaches to the study, she included a brief disclosure of her own poverty experiences.

The Biographical Self

I, too, am an educator that grew up in poverty. My experiences as a child of poverty and an educator of children of poverty drove me to focus my research on bringing to light the voices of educators raised in poverty. I wanted to learn from other educators that possibly shared a similar experience. I wanted to learn from these stakeholders what they felt helped these children and their families cope with the challenges faced while living in poverty.

I graduated from East Texas Baptist University (ETBU) with my BSE in May of 1995 with a Reading specialization. I was the first and only person in my immediate family to obtain a college degree. I later received my Masters in Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Texas at Tyler, and now I am working to complete my doctorate in Educational Leadership. I have committed a total of 20 years of teaching in

private and public education. The majority of my years teaching were in a reading classroom. I love helping children learn to read in the early years and pursue a love of reading in their later elementary years. I now work in the education department of two local colleges, teaching what I love to others.

Regarding the profession of education, I always loved working with children. When I was in high school, I worked at a photography studio helping with family photoshoots. I babysat a lot on weekends and I worked at the local bowling alley. All of my jobs involved interacting with children, and I always knew that whatever I did would include working with children.

Once I graduated high school, I began volunteering in a local school district. I pulled at-risk children out of the classroom and helped them study for tests, learn their multiplication facts, and practice reading fluency. As a child, I had to learn some independent homework/study strategies to succeed in school. I had great teachers that would offer me advice and always encouraged me. I loved sharing some of my study habits and techniques with the students I worked with. I wanted them to know that even if they had to work independently at home, they could still be successful.

The school soon after hired me as a substitute teacher, and that was it; I was in love. After two years of volunteering and substitute teaching, I transferred to ETBU and starting working on my education degree. I feel my passion for learning, the positive reinforcement and encouragement I received from my teachers along the way, and the feeling of helping children succeed all played a part in my decision to be an educator. I

was blessed that between scholarships and Pell grants, I graduated with my BSE with very minimal student loan debt.

I feel educators who experienced poverty can relate to some of the struggles their students face daily. I was often frustrated as an educator because I thought these students were often misunderstood and often unjustly punished for things out of their control. As a child, I attended many different schools in a short period, my family structure changed multiple times, the educational background of my parents as well as the hours they worked limited the assistance I got with school work. Our housing conditions changed many times, from living with relatives to government apartments or rentals. I saw and experienced much chaos in the home.

Knowing my struggles as a child, I always had a special place in my heart for students I could see myself in. I believe my experiences impacted the way I interacted with my students and how I structured my classroom. As an educator, I always made sure my students knew I cared about them first and foremost. I encouraged them, as my teachers did me. I listened when they needed to talk, and I sometimes even shared my journey with them if I felt it would help them.

I allowed windows of time during the school day to complete homework with my assistance. I taught study strategies that students could utilize independently. I worked with students in small groups to tailor their educational needs. I also provided free after-school tutoring. We focused on character-building strategies, and I never allowed them to doubt themselves. I feel the relationship I built with my students helped me as much as it did them. This relationship positively impacted their educational as well as social

emotional growth. My goal was to teach them confidence, respect, and independence in a safe and positive environment.

Biases of an Autobiographical Self

As a researcher, I must lay out my own biases on the topic of study. Reflecting on my childhood and years as an educator allowed me the opportunity to acknowledge areas where my biases could sway my thinking and affect my research. I made a conscious effort to set aside my own beliefs throughout the process and only bring forth my participants' views. My own professional and personal life experiences guided the motivation behind this study. I have a great respect for educators that have a passion for working with children subjected to poverty. I wished to learn about other educators' experiences in poverty, in culture, and in school and the influence those experiences had on their current classroom practices.

Summary

Chapter III gave an overview of the narrative inquiry research method, thoroughly explained the participants and how they were chosen for the study, explained the researcher's role throughout the study, detailed data collection and data analysis, shared the provisions of trustworthiness, and communicated the findings. Narrative nonfiction is an important research method for learning and sharing an individual's lived experiences or group of individuals' lived experiences. A researcher must report the findings ethically, ensuring the story was accurately received and interpreted for determining what past experiences impacted their present and possible future experiences.

This narrative non-fiction method explored and documented the voices of six educators in Texas raised in poverty, and despite some risk factors, completed an educational degree and became practicing educators. A qualitative method was appropriate for reconstructing each participant's feelings, emotions, and experiences that overcame adversity and now lead in a profession that inhabits similar students. Chapter IV introduced each participant and presented the narrative non-fiction stories as told by each participant. Chapter IV shared the common themes and categories found by analyzing the stories. The study will then conclude in Chapter V, which detailed the summary, conclusions, implications, and future research recommendations.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

This chapter discussed the analysis of each of the research questions. Before the findings are discussed, the demographics of the six participants are identified. In chapter five, the discussion of the findings will mesh the findings within this study to that of the literature.

Demographics

Six participants participated in the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of each participant (see Table 3). The participants were asked to create their own pseudonym that reflected their race/ethnicity. Their chosen pseudonyms were utilized in this study.

Table 3*Demographics of Participants*

	Brandy	DeShawn	Hugo	Jenna	Margarita	Wayne
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male
Ethnicity	African American	African American	Hispanic	White	Hispanic	White
Attended K-12 in the U.S.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Geography of School Taught at	Urban	Urban	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Grade Level	1st	6-8 th	9-12 th	4 th	4 th	9-12 th
Subject	All	PE	Art	ELA	Math & Science	Chemistry
Degree Obtained	BS	M.Ed.	BA	BS	M.Ed.	BS

Prefaces about Poverty, Education, and their Relationship

The following prefaces were created from the participants' answers to questions they were asked about poverty, education, and their relationship. Each preface followed a three-paragraph structure. The first paragraph defined poverty, explained its adverse effects, and discussed ways culture could combat it. The second paragraph described K-12 education, its pro and cons, and ways to make it exemplary. The last paragraph

described the relationship between poverty and K-12 education and how to make it exemplary.

Brandy

To Brandy, poverty was “vast,” and there were a lot of people in poverty. It “crosse[d] all lines...with gender, race, and socio-economic levels.” It could be long-term (generational) or short-term (e.g., out of work; illness). It affected children by “means of [not] having” (e.g., not having dinner each night, clean clothes, electricity, running water, or shoes). Another adverse effect Brandy discussed was “difficulty” on the part of the parent or caregiver (e.g., difficulty in feeding your kids, difficulty in paying your bills, and difficulty in putting your pride to the side). The kids suffered “because of the pride that the parent may have because they don’t want to tell anyone that they’re struggling financially,” and they told their kids, “don’t go to school and tell.” Brandy felt it was tough to combat poverty because a lot of “people don’t talk about it.” They were “ashamed” because “it’s like a stigma.”

Brandy explained that K-12 education was “geared to help those succeed who ha[d] means, who [were] middle class and above.” They said it was “focused for everyone,” but “I don’t believe that it is.” Instead, it is the “teachers who want to go the extra mile to help students” who improved the education for those “children who [were] below the poverty line.” Unfortunately, there were some teachers that did not “really want to help certain students because they may not be taking baths,” but these were “kids, you know they can’t help that.” Some positives were that most of us did want “every child to succeed; we want[ed] them to go to college, and we want[ed] them to do better.”

Brandy believed that teachers work very hard, and that “we’re doing the best that we can, but there are so many gaps.” Reading was “fundamentally the biggest gap that we have in the United States.” “We have fourth and fifth graders who do not know how to read.” If you could not read, you could not comprehend or understand other subjects. To make this education system exemplary, Brandy argued that we needed to improve attendance, “like you got to come to school so you can learn.” We also “need[ed] programs” – in-person programs for reading and in person programs for math, so we could “close the gaps.” Not everybody was “meant to go to college, some students, you know, go to trade school,” and we wanted students to “progress into something that suit[ed] them best,” but reading had to improve for students to even be successful in trades. “In this day and age, we should not struggle with reading so much.” Something “need[ed] to be implemented to close the gaps, because they [were] only getting bigger.”

The relationship between poverty and education “depend[ed] on the family.” Homelife and school life were connected “because if your home life [was] not in balance, your school life [was] not going to be in balance.” Some students lived in “multi-generational families that all live[d] in one home, and they’re able to help each other.” You also had single parents who found “time to work with their scholars (her name for her students),” but then you also had those students who were “hungry and they [couldn’t] focus,” or older siblings who were juggling their schoolwork and that of siblings and “they’re frustrated.” To make this relationship more exemplary, Brandy stated that “it shouldn’t matter what’s your socio-economic level. Does it matter? It does matter.” Some schools “have it figured out, and they have the secret, but everybody needs

to know that... the whole secret.” If a school knows how to reach scholars who struggle, it should be “shared, but it is not shared across the board academically.” The U.S. needed to figure out a way “where all students should succeed.”

DeShawn

DeShawn gave a standard definition of poverty- living below the average income for family size, qualifying for food stamps or free or reduced lunch, or depending on other forms of government assistance. He felt there were “tons of poverty adverse effects,” all from “living in a world of lack” (e.g., a lack of resources, lack of emotional support, and lack of technology). He thought that students who lacked were falling behind students that did not lack. As a culture, we just put a “band-aid over poverty.” Money was not allocated appropriately because we were not “lead(ing) more with our heart” (e.g., one Lamborghini could pay for a “mini house suburb in a homeless area”- He was referencing the tiny homes built on HGTV).

DeShawn felt defining K-12 education was difficult because it “depends on where you're at” and “what's your demographic.” Some pros of K-12 education were that it is free and available to everyone, and it is “how you succeed.” He explained that “the more knowledge you have, the more marketable you are.” Many of the cons dealt with funding and resources (e.g., some schools get greater funding based on taxes; some schools have one to one technology), as well as a need for more diverse teachers (e.g., students perform better when they are taught by or see more teachers like them). To make education more exemplary, he thought every school should be on a level playing field

with funding to create an education system of equity that provided “true equal opportunity.”

DeShawn felt undoubtedly a relationship between poverty and K-12 education existed, much like the relationship between poverty and the justice system (e.g., less than 10% of the student body might be Hispanic and African American, yet they make up over 50% of the campus's discipline). He expressed that schools are “just not sitting there trying to understand their demographics” (e.g., “giving a student detention because she talked too loud and that is part of her culture”). He wasn't sure if education and poverty would ever both be exemplary, but by improving education, he thought we would begin to improve things on the other side. He felt a starting point would be to educate our youth with a level playing field of resources.

Hugo

Poverty, to Hugo, “can take different shapes with different people” (e.g., dumpster diving for furniture and home essentials, sleeping in your car, living hotel to hotel, wearing the same sweatshirt all week because it's the only one you have, having food stamps but no way to heat the food you buy, and having a limited diet). An adverse effect of this was the feeling of “uncertainty.” Uncertainty about your clothing, uncertainty about where you would sleep each night, uncertainty about what food would be available. Essentially “not knowing where things are going to come from or where you're going to be.” Hugo felt the most significant way to combat poverty was education. He mentioned that education brings “stability” – “education is the greatest tool to get people out of poverty.”

Hugo argued that K-12 education in the United States was “unfair, unjust” – “it’s not the same” for everyone (e.g., different funding based on tax brackets and various technology and educational resources). He stated that “generational wealth isn’t monetary; it’s educational,” and everyone doesn’t get the same educational opportunity. One of the pros of the education system, Hugo described was the teachers. They were the “heart and soul of this education.” Magnet programs were another positive that allowed students options to avoid the school “that has holes in the walls and roaches and rats” and attend a school that provided an opportunity to display their “effort and brain” and “the opportunity to get out” of generational poverty. The main con was that “low flying schools” received less funding. He emphasized, “if the school struggled academically, you shouldn’t take away from them,” but instead help them. To make the education system exemplary, Hugo argued that schools needed “equal footing”- there is “no equality,” and we have to stop saying, well, teachers are “making it work”- “I hate it” – “I hate being told that.” We shouldn’t have to make it work or make the best of our situation- that’s just “crappy.”

Hugo described the relationship between poverty and K-12 education as “symbiotic”- “the snake eating itself.” A “bad education leads to more poverty,” and you never truly understood “the worth in education” – therefore generational poverty. “You just keep repeating the same mistakes over and over” if you don’t have something “to break that cycle, which is a good education.” To make this relationship exemplary, we needed “equality in terms of what schools get, what teachers get, and what students get.”

Jenna

Jenna felt poverty involved some form of deprivation (e.g., inadequate shelter, improper clothing for the season, or wondering where your next meal would come). One of the main adverse effects she mentioned was that poverty was “anxiety-inducing,” requiring a need for coping skills to manage school stress on top of home life stress, and the need for a support system both at home and at school. Jenna mentioned that “even with caring parents,” students of poverty lacked support because of a lack of contact hours. As a culture, Jenna thought it was essential to make sure kids had their basic needs met (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, and an education). She felt schools offered a safe place for children and a way to break that “vicious cycle” of poverty (e.g., obtain a degree, a skill, or a trade). Most importantly, Jenna felt “hope” was “the deal-breaker” for many children subjected to poverty. After years of watching mom, grandma, and great-grandma living precisely the same, she felt these children needed to know things could change, and they needed to realize what resources could promote that change.

K-12 education in the United States, to Jenna, could be described as heavily focused on testing. She said as a child of poverty, you were already coming in with all of these disadvantages, and then a standardized test was placed in front of you and typically only made you “feel dumber.” She went on to say, “It's just ridiculous.” Jenna felt the pros of the United States' education system were that everyone gets it, unlike some other countries. She mentioned that whether children realize it or not, “it's a gift”- even with all its faults, education was “the light, light at the end of the tunnel, and it [gave] hope” and a way to “have a bright future.” The cons included social issues (e.g., feeling like an

outcast due to home life and being teased for not having or being different) and a more stressful school environment due to high stakes testing. Now teachers must spend less time on fun activities (e.g., the arts and “passion units”), which could improve a child's “emotional health and mental health.” To make the education system exemplary, Jenna felt we needed “an intentional conscientious” alignment of state standards to child development. She felt teachers could better serve children by focusing on their strengths instead of consistently reminding them of their weaknesses.

Jenna felt the relationship between poverty and education was not improving. She asked, “who's always the group that scores the lowest, always” on standardized tests? She further explained that the educational gaps for children subjected to poverty were getting “wider, not narrower.” To improve this relationship, Jenna felt progress monitoring should replace high stakes testing. She said, “let's look at the standards” and “come up with something that is developmentally appropriate” that can better serve all kids, especially those in poverty.

Margarita

Margarita, coming to the United States from a south American country, described poverty in the United States as “very weird.” She was surprised that a country so rich had so much poverty. She felt the adverse effects were this cycle of poverty – which affected “good decisions, good motivation, and also the opportunities [were] not there for them” (those in poverty). To combat this, everybody needed opportunity and motivation. Each person was unique and therefore required different resources to promote opportunity and motivation.

Margarita felt the K-12 education system in America was “broken” because “they just keep testing.” The people guiding education “do not know what the kids need.” The pros to this education system were that “it is free” and “everybody has the right to go to school,” and the schools were “pretty places.” The cons were that all this testing makes teachers lose their “rhythm” in planning and instruction, and they were losing “the freedom to teach.” Kids did not all learn at the same pace, and the repeated testing does not allow the time to meet the students' individual needs. To make the education system exemplary, Margarita stated that “decisions are not one decision for everybody” – instead, one should look “at the needs of the students,” and see the “struggles of the kids” and “the struggles of the family.”

Margarita felt the relationship between poverty and K-12 education in the United States was very close. She said “poverty makes education difficult for the students” because their mind was not “wanting to receive the information.” The brain was in “a surviving mode,” so the students can't “process and analyze and have a higher-order thinking.” To improve this relationship, Margarita felt the parents needed the opportunity to provide the student's “basic needs” (food, clothing, and shelter) so that the student does not have to “worry for what is happening at home” when they went to school.

Wayne

To Wayne, poverty in the United States was more than lacking food; it was “a mindset.” Poverty was when “you can't take care of yourself, and you got to rely on somebody else to take care of you” (e.g., grandparents, aunts, strangers slipping you money, or the government). The main adverse effect of poverty was lots of mobility and

“just instability.” “It (poverty) puts you behind the power curve.” Many in poverty were worried about the immediate problem and did not think enough down the line. They were constantly torn between the conundrum of “I gotta do this, so I don’t have to do that.” Most people in poverty were thinking, “five minutes ahead, they don’t think five years ahead.” To combat poverty, there needed to be an “emphasis on education,” not just college; we also needed to tell students about other opportunities they may feel was more within their reach (e.g., apprenticeships, the military, and trades).

Wayne described K-12 education in the United States as “unrealistic.” He felt we did not put “enough emphasis on the smart kids,” and he thought we forced unrealistic expectations on the lower kids. He said, “we are putting good money in a bad bet.” He hated to express it that way, but felt “some kids, we can throw a ton of money and a ton of time at [and] it’s not gonna do anything.” The pros of K-12 education were that the students “got like a support group.” He further explained that “we love the kids” and in a rural setting, “we know their parents... we’ve seen the kids since they were in elementary school.” He perceived public school accountability as a pro because when students entered from private schools, “our public-school kids blow them out of the water” academically. Last, he felt athletics offered students a sense of community they needed, and it was “part of the enjoyment” they got from school. He expressed that the stress put on teachers “to bring these lower kids up” was a con. He said, “Those are my kids that I love most, and I’m not trying to get them college-ready. I want them just to be successful.” He then suggested that many successful people did not go to college. To make education exemplary, Wayne felt that students could decide on a college or a trade

path around sophomore year. He acknowledged that many larger schools provided more opportunities to pursue different directions, but he believed these opportunities needed to be obtainable at all schools. He felt he was “pretty realistic,” and he suggested that some kids enjoy knowing the difference between “120 volts and 240 volts,” over “interpreting *To Kill a Mockingbird*,” which is okay. For the students who wanted to pursue college, he expressed, “we need more math and science.” He perceived math and science as “the stopping point” for many students; if not proficient in these subjects, it hindered their goals. He stated that we need “great teachers.” He stated that he never wanted a student “not to be able to do what they want[ed] to do because they had a crappy math or science teacher.”

Wayne felt, “regular needs are burdens” with poverty, and therefore, “there’s no emphasis on education.” Once people began to see the opportunities from education, then they were “looking five years down the road... 10 years” and thinking about how, what I did, was “going to affect my next generation.” He said, “I don’t know how you tell people to do that.” To make the relationship between education and poverty more exemplary, you needed to build “relationships.” The “relationships we have with kids at school” can help them to start exploring these opportunities.

Challenges Students of Poverty Face

This section addresses the following research questions: (1) How do successful educators who grew up in poverty understand the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students? and (2) How do successful educators who grew up in poverty improve the cultural, social, and educational

experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students? The focus was on eleven dimensions: (1) social and historical, (2) financial and economical, (3) political, (4) ethnic and racial, (5) cognitive and academic, (6) school behavioral, (7) educational, (8) family, (9) neighborhood and community, (10) psychological and emotional, and (11) physical health. For each dimension, the participants were asked about (1) corresponding challenges, (2) the ways the participants helped these students overcome these challenges, (3) the ways the education system could help these students overcome these challenges, and (3) the coping mechanisms used by the students, their families, and their communities to overcome these challenges.

The Social and Historical Dimension

This section will discuss the social and historical dimension.

Challenges. Three main social challenges discussed were feeling inferior, refraining from participation in school events, and social awkwardness. Four of the six participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Jenna, & Wayne) felt their students experienced inferiority from their peers. The feeling of inferiority resulted from belittlement from classmates due to appearance (unbrushed hair, thrift-store clothing, or worn out shoes), a lack of cleanliness (smelling bad or clothing looking dirty), or the appearance of their home. Students were “making comments and judging them [the children that grew up in poverty]” (Brandy), and other kids “pick on people and they tease people..., because they don't understand what they're [the kids in poverty] going through” (Jenna). Wayne, also a bus driver, noticed students wanting to get off the bus at a neighboring home to avoid feeling embarrassed by their own home.

In terms of refraining from participating in school events, five of the six participants (Deshawn, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) considered it difficult for the students of poverty to participate in outside of school events due to lack of transportation and not having the money necessary for the extracurriculars (athletics, band, choir, or drama) or school functions (prom or homecoming). Jenna pointed out that it's "not necessarily what you see or what you hear, but what you don't see and what you don't hear." She further stated that she did not hear them talking about extracurriculars or social activities.

Three participants (DeShawn, Jenna, & Margarita) felt that children subjected to poverty sometimes struggle with social awkwardness. DeShawn felt students do not know how to "act in certain situations," especially in a public setting, because they do not practice this at home. Jenna also mentioned that students of poverty may be "attention-seeking," and not always in a positive way.

Some of the participants' key terms when discussing historical challenges were difficulty balancing home and school responsibilities, continuing the cycle of poverty, living in a broken home, and losing historical traditions of their culture. Five of the six participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) felt their students carried a heavy load balancing home and school responsibilities. The participants defined balancing home and school as a difficult task because their students were having to not only take care of their school work but also work a job to help the family with bills, help with grandparents living in the home, help prepare meals for siblings, or offer homework help to siblings while parents were working. Jenna felt that the children subjected to

poverty “have to take care of everybody” (siblings, parents, & grandparents) which leaves little time for “their plans and their dreams and their goals to, you know, go to work, so that they can help the family.” Hugo said Educators were “fighting against the parents” who don't see the “point for their own kids to have an education.”

All six participants mentioned the historical tendency of continuing the cycle of poverty and recognized that some children were “not mentally strong to push past all that” (DeShawn). The continuous cycle of poverty usually occurred due to children attending schools with fewer resources and therefore not resulting in quality education, not continuing an education to begin working to support the family or to purchase things they need or want, or possibly ending up in jail like a parent. DeShawn said historically, schools were segregated and “had less opportunities, not as good resources and not as good buildings,” and the “same thing goes on today,” but we “word it more politically correct” like “title-one school” or “economically disadvantaged.” Wayne felt children subjected to poverty associate “how their parents lived and what their parents went through to say basically, I'm going to do the same thing,” and this becomes a cyclical problem unless the family “see[s] the importance of education and they support their children's education” (Hugo).

All six participants brought up the broken home – living with a single parent or a grandparent, aunt, or guardian. The participants mentioned some acute effects of the broken home like mobility, loss of family time, and the heaviness of responsibility mentioned above. Wayne noted that the kids in poverty “move in and move out,” and they don't have that home stability, and Hugo felt “that family time that's really important

in your development as a person, that's not there.” Only one participant, Margarita, brought up the loss of cultural traditions. She mentioned that she worked with many immigrant students, and they “don't know their history” or “traditions” (native customs, native language, or family lineage). She was surprised that you could ask some of the kids questions about their grandparents, customs, and language from their native country, and they did not know them.

Teacher Support. Some of the standard terms that came up when the six participants talked about ways they helped students overcome social and historical challenges were providing an outlet for their students' frustrations, sharing their personal stories, and offering hope for the future. All six participants felt students of poverty often just needed an outlet for their frustrations. Sometimes a teacher just needed to “Crack their shell” because once kids saw you were trying to “help them out, most of the time they [were] receptive to that” (DeShawn). Jenna recognized that children subjected to poverty had “the weight of the world on their shoulders,” and talking with a teacher could be an excellent outlet for relieving that weight. If these students struggled with verbalizing their frustrations, Brandy recommended a journal for their thoughts.

Five of the six educators (DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, and Wayne) mentioned they shared their individual stories of poverty with their students at appropriate times, just to let them know they were once there too. Jenna said students of poverty needed to know “others have overcome it [poverty].” DeShawn and Wayne both mentioned they shared their personal stories of poverty, to emphasize the importance of their past not being a crutch but instead their purpose for making better life choices.

All six participants offered a message of hope to their students. Hugo said his goal was for students to be “thinking actively about what's in front of [them] ... think[ing] about what's around the corner, what's five years ahead, eight years ahead.” DeShawn felt it was important to let students know they cannot be “retreating to the image of what everybody wants [them] to be or everybody expects [them] to be” because that was not them, and they could “be better than this.”

Role of the Education System. The participants were asked how the K-12 education system could help the students overcome these social and historical challenges. The participants mentioned counseling for students, professional development for educators, and resources for families. The participants considered counseling an excellent avenue for helping these students to overcome poverty challenges and a way for schools to “focus on building them [the students] up and keeping them in a good mental, emotional place” (Jenna). Counseling could be an avenue for venting frustrations (caring for siblings or balancing work and school), dealing with emotional issues (stigma of poverty, absent parent [jail or uninvolved], or living conditions [home instability, loss of utilities, or mobility]).

Professional development for educators was also considered a key component to helping these students. Deshawn emphasized that some teachers were not as quick to understand the student's circumstances, and therefore they did not know how to reach these students emotionally or academically. He felt teachers needed more instruction on “social-emotional strategies.” Margarita mentioned that incorporating schoolwide

“multicultural programs,” which helped students and teachers understand and appreciate other cultures, would prove beneficial.

Three participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Deshawn) felt students and families needed more resources. These resources included food, gas cards, and money for utilities. Brandy mentioned, we “help with toy drives, well, what about everything else?” Hugo felt schools needed to listen more “to the teachers who work with this specific student population” about helping them. Hugo and Wayne brought up the need for all students, not just “high flyers” (a term Hugo used for the “smarter” students), to become exposed to stem field trips and trade and apprenticeship opportunities that may be of greater interest or more attainable for them, so they would stay in school and hopefully break the poverty cycle. An example Hugo gave was, “Timmy over here; once he sees it [an engineering program], oh, crap, I can do that for a living, [it might] change his whole attitude towards education.”

Community Coping. All six participants expressed that students were not coping well with social or historical challenges. Instead, students were withdrawn and acting out. DeShawn stated, the students “did not have the proper coping mechanisms [for] how to deal with things that [weren’t] going away.” Hugo noticed students “shut off” and think “you don’t care about me anyway, so why does it matter.”

On the other hand, communities were considered to be stepping up the most to overcome historical challenges by advocating for student resources through nonprofit organizations. Five participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) felt Communities in Schools were a huge benefit for helping students of poverty overcome

historical barriers that affected them socially and emotionally (inadequate school supplies, insufficient clothing, and food). One participant (DeShawn) acknowledged the work of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators (TABSE) and local chapters that promoted fundraisers that provided scholarships to minority students and professional training to help teachers better serve these students.

Two participants (Brandy & Hugo) felt a coping mechanism for parents was asking for help. Brandy mentioned she observed more parents putting the social “stigma to the side to get help.” Parents admitted, “I need this help,” and they sought resources from the school (food for weekends, school supplies, tutoring services for their children, and help completing applications for government subsidies such as free and reduced lunch, food stamps, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)).

Financial and Economic Dimension

This section will discuss the financial and economic dimension of poverty.

Challenges. The participants shared three main financial and economic challenges: having low-wage jobs (so parents worked more than one job, students worked, or the students lived in multi-family households), single-parent homes (only one income provider), and poor money management. Five of the six participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Margarita, & Wayne) felt many of the financial hardships were due to low salaries or low availability of hours at one job, which required parents to work more than one job. Students that were old enough even had to take on a job to help with the family expenses. Brandy further explained that these families experienced financial hardships that made it hard to consistently pay utility bills, so “they are merging together

[with other family members] so that they can pull their income together to survive through this hardship.” Wayne expressed that many students of poverty were afraid “to go do their own thing” (like go to college) because they felt they needed to stay home to financially “support the mom or the dad.” All six participants mentioned the financial struggle of having only one income provider in the home. One parent working a low-wage job made supporting the family difficult.

Two of the six participants (Jenna & Wayne) attributed financial hardships to poor money management (buying expensive wants with tax refunds instead of paying bills or saving), spending money on cigarettes and alcohol, or spending more than they made resulting in lots of credit card debt. All six participants felt a result of the low-wage salaries or poor money management left students lacking in the areas of utilities (electricity, water, and internet), basic needs (food, clothing, and shelter), and supplies (school supplies and technology).

Hugo felt technology was the most significant financial barrier affecting students of poverty. He said we expected students to “go to Starbucks or... go stand outside of the school” to use the Wi-Fi to get their schoolwork done, which is an unreasonable request. DeShawn recognized that many of these students “only eat when they are at school,” or they lacked resources such as the internet or electricity, which was a financial as well as academic barrier. The participants all expressed that the pandemic worsened their students' financial hardships and made the need for resources (such as food, supplies, and technology) more apparent now that students were not in school.

Teacher Support. As an educator, the participants mentioned promoting school initiatives and drives (angel tree, shoe, clothing, school supply, and food drives) to bring in community resources for students. All six participants mentioned that there were resources out there, and parents needed to be aware of them. Brandy specifically said that she thought “everyone has the right to the information,” not just the ones you thought needed it, because some people were more private about their financial hardships. Margarita said they needed to know “how and where [the resources] are.”

Role of the Education System. All six participants felt the school worked hard to meet the students' basic needs by packing backpacks with food for the weekends, having school supply drives, clothing, shoe drives, and angel trees around Christmas. Brandy felt maybe schools could apply for a grant that provided even “\$50 per student to help with school clothes.” She said, “a little bit can go a long way.” Margarita expressed that the kids “have the same clothes for weeks and in winter they [are] using the same clothes for summer.” DeShawn mentioned that schools could help with barriers in “filling out the applications” for extra supports. He felt some families had a language barrier and needed that help. Three of the participants brought up a need for parent seminars or training. Jenna mentioned even “financial literacy classes,” but she also said “that it's hard to get our hands on the parents and teach them things.” DeShawn felt that by “equipping the parents with the stuff that they need” to be the children's “supporters at home” that would “go a longer, longer way to the overall growth.”

Community Coping. In regards to students, the only coping mechanism shared was seeking work. Five of the six participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, &

Wayne) mentioned that the students would seek out a job to help them afford things they needed (clothes, shoes, and school supplies) and even help the family with the bills. With regards to parents, an acknowledgment of needing help was the primary coping mechanism mentioned. Two participants (Brandy & Hugo) felt parents coped with financial and economic hardships by “swallowing their pride” and letting the school know they do not have money for resources (supplies or tutoring).

All six participants acknowledged that the community donation drives were the number one financial and economic resource for families with hardships. Three participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Margarita) mentioned parents in the community stepped up to donate items (clothing, shoes, school supplies, & food donations) for students who did not have such things. Two participants (Jenna & Wayne) felt local churches were a huge help for students by gathering food, clothing, and school supplies through community drives. The churches then dropped the schools' items off for counselors to distribute to students in need. Five participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) mentioned the impact Communities in Schools (CIS) did make with the right CIS worker (provided food for the weekends, connected parents with government-funded resources, and provided needed school supplies).

Political Dimension

This section will discuss the political dimension.

Challenges. The participants' main political challenges were deportation/nonresident problems, legal issues (Child Protective Services (CPS) checks, the arrest of parents, & custody battles), and lack of proper academic funding in schools.

Two participants (Hugo & Margarita) expressed that parents and students worry about family members being deported because they were not US residents. Some effects of this on the students were emotional shutdown, lack of focus on schoolwork, and acting out at school. Margarita mentioned that the student's "difficult[y] [becomes] our difficult[y]," meaning the whole school felt the family's hardship. Hugo pointed out that another legal challenge is entering college as an undocumented student. The students struggled with the FAFSA and TASFA requirements.

All six participants felt many students of poverty "see a different side of the legal system" (Jenna). Some of these experiences included having a parent or sibling in jail, sometimes "for the most minute crimes" (DeShawn), CPS visits for neglect (lack of food, shelter, or medical attention), custody battles in courtrooms (parents were fighting over parental rights), and going to food stamp, chip, or other government service appointments. The participants noted that many of these legal encounters had a psychological effect on the students (the students were embarrassed, scared, and often unsure of who they would be living with).

Five participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt that federal and state policy on educational standards was not met with sufficient funding. Jenna said we ended up doing "this partially and this partially and this partially and this partially." Jenna further stated that students were getting "almost what they need, but not all the way." Margarita felt the state standards had an unwritten "low expectation for the poor kids."

Teacher's Support. Many of the educators felt their hands were tied when it comes to political/legal challenges, and the only thing they could do is offer encouragement. Four of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Margarita, & Wayne) emphasized that families dealing with legal issues such as deportation or an arrest was “out of the hands of educators” (Margarita). They also felt their hands were tied when it came to school funding and accountability issues. All six participants mentioned their primary support for students dealing with political or legal problems was to encourage them. Brandy said, “I try to make it the best day that I can for them” when they were going through a difficulty. Wayne emphasized that he reminded his students that were embarrassed by a parent being arrested, “That's not you. Don't let that define you, just keep focused.”

Role of the Education System. The school system's support was in the form of counseling for the students, parent nights, and a creating a home/school liaison. All six participants mentioned some form of counseling for the students. The participants felt students needed an outlet for the legal frustrations they encountered. This outlet included talking with a counselor on campus or being part of a panel discussion guided by the counselor over informational videos such as how to behave with law enforcement and documentaries like 13 (the history of the 13th amendment).

Three of the six participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) felt parent nights were crucial for political/legal support. Parent nights were a great way to foster a healthy home/school connection. The parent nights could be an avenue for explaining campus resources as well as have people available that could help the parents with the process of

completing necessary school (free and reduced lunch), special services (RTI, 504, or Resource), and college entry paperwork (FAFSA, TASFA, College applications).

One participant, Jenna, brought up the need for a home/school liaison. She often felt parents got caught up in truancy or CPS issues due to gaps in subsidies from missed appointments with the food stamp office, social security office, or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) office. Jenna felt like if parents did not have gaps in their subsidies, students would not lack as much. She hoped someone could check-in and make sure the families were getting to their appointments and had the means to take care of their kids' basic needs.

Community Coping. As far as coping with legal/political challenges, five participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) did not feel students or families were coping well or knew how to manage. Jenna felt the families “normalize and make light of things” to feel better about their legal issues. In other words, it was not conceived as a big deal that dad had been to jail a couple of times; it's normal. Margarita felt families coped by hiding what they were going through (they hid their citizenship status, hid that dad is in jail, and hid that mom was deported). One participant, DeShawn, on the other hand, felt students protested within-group organizations to voice their stance on political/legal issues they thought were unfair.

Ethnic & Racial Dimension

This section will discuss the ethnic and racial dimension of students in poverty.

Challenges. The ethnic and racial challenges for students of poverty centered around a lack of representation at school and a lack of cultural understanding. The

participants felt this lack of cultural representation within staff and lack of cultural knowledge in schools resulted in a higher representation of Hispanic and African American students in resource classes. There were also higher disciplinary actions within these ethnicities. Two participants (Brandy & DeShawn) felt Hispanic and African American cultures were underrepresented in the curriculum. The two participants felt students “should be able to relate and see themselves” (Brandy) in the curriculum and “not just one month out of the year” (DeShawn). Brandy further stated if these kids were not hearing about themselves or seeing themselves in the curriculum, “then maybe they're thinking there's something wrong with them, and nothing is wrong [with them].”

A lack of cultural understanding, was acknowledged by four participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita). Some of the effects from this lack of cultural awareness were students were overly diagnosed with academic learning disabilities and were disciplined for incomplete work at school due to a lack of resources at home. DeShawn recognized that “most economic[ally] disadvantaged children are Hispanic or black,” and most of their teachers were white. DeShawn and Brandy felt like students often did not see their race represented in teachers or administrators, Deshawn felt some teachers automatically stereotype their students (the students do not care about school or display disrespectful behavior). Hugo mentioned that these stereotypes from teachers often made Hispanic and African American students “automatically assume that white teachers are racist,” which he felt from his experience was not the case. Hugo felt most teachers wanted to help their students. Still, instead, these misunderstandings often led to an increase in negative behaviors.

Teacher's Support. The participants shared three main supports educators should do to help with ethnic/racial challenges: racially matched mentoring, building trusting relationships with the students, and celebrating student diversity. Two participants saw the need for racially matched mentoring. DeShawn said sometimes students needed a “black on black conversation.” Deshawn sometimes felt students needed to hear, “You can be on time to class; you can do your work just as good as everybody else; you're smart... don't feed into the stereotypes.” DeShawn and Hugo both felt it was important to reiterate to Hispanic and African American students that they do not lack support from their teachers. Sometimes these students thought they were fighting against the statistics (more likely to quit school and more likely to go to jail).

All six participants recognized the importance of building a relationship with their students. The participants felt that building a relationship with students reduced any academic or behavioral misunderstandings and led to more patience and empathy for the students' situations and mutual respect for one another. DeShawn mentioned that the students just needed to know “somebody is in [their] corner.” Four participants said celebrating diversity can counteract ethnic and racial challenges (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita). They felt exposing students to diverse literature, music, art, holidays, customs, people, and events in history would help students feel a greater sense of pride in their own culture.

Role of the Education System. The participants felt the education system was to remain steadfast in having high expectations for all students and teachers while celebrating their students' culture and teaching social emotional learning. The six

participants mentioned that educators need to expect the best of all their students and help them reach that potential with empathy and patience. It was understood that schools do “not give up on [their students] even after the first, second, and third time” the students messed up (DeShawn). Instead, good educators sought out why- Why were they behaving this way? Why were they struggling?

Three participants (Brandy, DeShawn & Margarita) emphasized the importance of schools having high expectations for teachers. They felt teachers needed quality professional development that focused on teaching children that grew up in poverty with empathy and patience because “in order to have the empathy, you have to have the patience to understand what's going on” in the child's life (DeShawn).

Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, and Margarita) felt one way to help celebrate their students is building that home and school connection through multicultural events on campus or in their neighborhoods that celebrate their diversity. Brandy stated, “parent involvement is the best, especially when someone can be proud and vocal and express what makes them them [who they were] and what makes them happy.” Five of the participants (Brandy, Deshawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) discussed the impact social-emotional learning had on helping students cope with ethnic and racial challenges. Social-emotional learning impacted how students managed their emotions, problem-solved, set individual goals, and practiced empathy.

Community Coping. Explaining coping mechanisms, the students, the families, and the community utilized in dealing with ethnic and racial challenges was difficult for the participants. They did not know how the community was coping.

Academic & Cognitive Dimension

This section will discuss the academic and cognitive dimension.

Challenges. The main academic challenge mentioned by the participants was that the home environment did not promote education. All six participants felt these students start school already behind non-impooverished students due to a lack of books in the home, lack of people reading books to them in the house, lower vocabulary which heeded comprehension, poor penmanship, and a lack of educational resources in the home such as math computer games. Deshawn said students of poverty “lack that type of environment that feeds education.” The participants further emphasized that students did not have time to complete their school work due to work or home responsibilities (taking care of siblings or house chores), or they did not have the help (a parent to study with them or check their work) or resources needed at home to complete the schoolwork (internet, a computer, crayons, markers, or a calculator), and therefore their grades suffered.

Some of the main cognitive challenges for children subjected to poverty mentioned by the participants were maturity gaps, increased stress levels, and inability to focus. Three participants (Hugo, Jenna & Wayne) addressed students' maturity levels in poverty. They felt there were two extremes (1) the students matured too early (due to taking on parental responsibilities such as caring for siblings, cooking, cleaning, and working at a very young age) and could not correctly handle certain emotions (anger, frustration, and resentment); or (2) The students were stuck in a childlike (overly immature) state due to trauma in the home, absentee parents, or neglect.

Three participants (Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) recognized an increased stress level with children subjected to poverty. This high-stress level was a result of knowing they could not get help with schoolwork at home, extreme fatigue from caring for siblings, grandparents, or home/work responsibilities, and the instability at home (lack of food, lack of consistency with who lives in the house, and the possibility of necessary utilities like electricity and water being shut off). Margarita explained it as “their brain is always in alert mode.”

The last cognitive challenge, an inability to focus, was brought up by all six participants. The participants felt hunger, stress, worry about home life as addressed above, aggravating afflictions (rashes, lice, insect bites, sinuses), and lack of persistence and confidence impacted these children’s ability to focus in school. The participants felt this hindered the students’ learning, so they were “not actually reflecting what they’re capable of doing” (Jenna).

Teacher’s Support. Personalized instruction, informed parents, and consistency in expectations were essential strategies for educators to help with academic and cognitive challenges. Five of the participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt personalized instruction such as tutoring, peer tutoring (sometimes children subjected to poverty “can be shut off from adults” [Hugo]), and small group instruction were necessary to face academic as well as cognitive challenges. Brandy felt this personalized instruction “lets students know you’re worthy [of] my time.” Jenna shared that students needed to know, “It’s okay to not be good at something. It’s okay not to like something, but you just got to try.”

Three participants (Brandy, Margarita, & Wayne) felt it was important for parents and teachers to work together as a team. Brandy said, “I think parents want to help their kids, I mean, they're poor, but they don't want them to be dumb.” The three participants felt like sometimes parents just did not know how to help their kids or were not aware of their struggles. Teachers needed to make the parents aware and provide the resources needed (study material, flashcards, tutoring resources, or instructions in another language) for them to be able to help their child.

Three participants (Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) emphasized structure and consistency (a standard system of classroom organization or routines). Jenna said, “We must focus on what we do have control over,” and that was their school environment. She said “be picky” about expected behaviors (taking notes, lesson layout, or submitting work) because “they need these study habits and they need this guidance.” Wayne felt these children needed to understand that they had to put forth the effort to be successful, “you failed because you didn't study; you failed because you didn't pay attention in class.”

Role of the Education System. The participants felt the focus of the education system should be meaningful learning and celebrating academic success. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Jenna, & Margarita) felt learning should be made meaningful. Meaningful learning entailed vertical alignment across grade levels to improve schoolwide areas of weakness (reading and math), sharing the purpose for learning (e.g., math helps with building a budget, grocery shopping, cooking, etc.), and providing alternative methods for learning (hands-on activities, learning labs, and rotating

stations). Four participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) felt students needed to have their strengths identified and celebrated. Jenna said, “If you're going to identify a child's weakness, you also need to identify their strengths. If you're going to work on a child's weakness, you also need to work on their strengths.” The participants felt schools often only focused on a student's weaknesses (special tutoring or classes for their shortcomings). They encouraged special courses that built up the strengths of their students.

Community Coping. The coping mechanisms educators noticed came from two extremes, seeking help or avoidance. Three of the participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) felt either the child or a parent sought help when there were academic or cognitive challenges. They pursued this help from neighbors, peers at school, or teachers. Three of the participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Wayne) felt students avoided what they struggle with instead of seeking any kind of help. They avoided reading, pretended a subject was lame or unimportant, acted like they did not care about their grades, or just pretended they were working when they were not. They would exhibit negative behavior to avoid admitting they needed help.

School Behavioral Dimension

This section will discuss the school behavioral dimension.

Challenges. Some school behavioral challenges for students subjected to poverty were attention-seeking, defensive, misunderstood, or anti-social behaviors. Three participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Margarita) recognized poverty students tended to be more attention-seeking. The students were overdramatic about being hurt (requesting an ice

pack or to visit the nurse), sought a lot of help to complete their work, or acted out (a class clown) just to seek attention from peers and teachers. Brandy felt they sometimes acted silly to prevent others from noticing their dirty clothes or worn-out shoes. Two participants (DeShawn & Wayne) noticed that when you address behaviors at school (sleeping in class, not completing work, acting out), students that grew up in poverty tended to be more defensive and quicker to react negatively (leave me alone type mentality or “you cannot tell me what to do” [DeShawn]).

Four of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Jenna) felt many of the behavior issues were the result of a misunderstanding. This misunderstanding could be related to social norms and expectations that were “acceptable in their world outside of school,” and it was difficult “to switch gears” (Jenna). DeShawn mentioned that the student sleeping in class was because they did not get enough sleep the night before, and they acted out when approached about it to try and cover their embarrassment. Two of the participants (Brandy and Hugo) also noticed anti-social tendencies (students being quiet and withdrawn) when these students were dealing with major traumatic issues at home (abuse, neglect, arrests, or deportation). Brandy felt a significant thing to consider with the behavior of children in poverty was, “If [their] home life is not in balance, [their] school life is not going to be in balance.”

Teacher’s Support. The educators recognized that they needed to communicate well with parents, understand the student’s circumstances, teach expectations, and redirect the behavior. Three of the participants (Brandy, Margarita, & Wayne) felt communication with parents was vital. They emphasized that parents can give insight into what is going

on with the child. The parent may also be the only person that could redirect the behavior into a positive one. Margarita said parents could be a “powerful” tool for teachers. All six participants brought up the need to be aware of each student's unique circumstances. The students recognized that teachers cared when the teachers were more patient and understanding. Brandy reiterated that “it is a mean, cruel world,” and things happen to them “at a young age,” and sometimes “teachers are like lifelines, more so than [they] would ever know.” Two of the participants (Jenna & Margarita) felt students need to be informed of the rules at school, how to follow them, and the consequences of not following them. The participants felt teachers could not expect students to know the expectations if they have not been taught the expectations. Jenna said, “it's our responsibility to teach these kids how to behave and to know right from wrong so when they get out of school, they can be productive members of society.” Two of the participants (DeShawn & Wayne) sometimes felt students just needed to know “how to make adjustments to other people,” like when they could turn on silly behavior and when they needed to turn it off (DeShawn). Wayne said, depending on who and what the student is dealing with, “some [students] you got to kick in the ass and some you got to pat on the back”. Wayne also felt you needed to show them how to move past that “brick wall” they thought was blocking them from moving forward and, therefore, led to their acting out.

Role of the Education System. When it comes to school behavioral challenges, the education system's role was to provide behavioral training for teachers and behavior support services/counseling for the students. Only one participant (DeShawn) recognized

the importance of behavioral training for teachers, but not all teachers. He said, “look at the stats to see who is writing up kids and why.” DeShawn felt these teachers needed extra support and training to understand cultural norms and behavioral management better. The other five participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) all saw the significance of behavior support services (mental breaks, team building activities, counseling, or sensory tools) for students. They felt everyone on campus (cafeteria workers, janitors, administrators, teachers, and maintenance staff) could provide behavioral support by encouraging students (positive visits or high fives in the hallway) and taking time for them (join them for lunch, play a game of basketball on the playground, or ask them about their day). They felt this sense of community-built trust. Jenna also thought behavioral support personnel needed to visit students during in-school suspension or detention to “make sure they know why they're there and then created a plan to prevent the behavior or correct the behavior.” She felt we need to quit dumping students in In School Suspension (ISS) repeatedly with no follow-up for how to redirect.

Community Coping. Two main coping mechanisms for the students were reflecting on the behavior and distracting themselves from their challenges. This was, interestingly enough, an equal toss-up between the male and female participants. The three female participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Margarita) felt students coped by reflecting (journaling, art, or music) about what was going on, why they were reacting as they were, and ways to improve. The three male participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Wayne) mentioned the students distracting themselves mainly through extracurricular activities

such as band or athletics. Hugo said extracurriculars were a great outlet, “a great way to deal with angst and frustration because of how the world is to them.”

Educational Dimension

This section will discuss poverty's educational dimension, which includes teachers, administrators, peers, and the broader school culture.

Challenges. The main educational challenges were academic gaps, a need for diverse teachers and administrators, and a lack of resources/funding. Four of the six participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) immediately mentioned the academic gap that was apparent statewide for low socioeconomic students. Brandy feared schools “are geared to help those succeed who have means.” After all, she said, look at the STAAR scores; those who were middle class and above score higher. Jenna felt schools were “ruining kids” with so many accommodations that reduced the student's workload and rigor level. She felt all students needed access to grade-appropriate rigor. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Wayne) felt diversity of faculty and staff were crucial. DeShawn emphasized that “certain demographics don't see what other demographics see,” and having a diverse faculty/staff could redirect misinterpretations of actions and behaviors...diversity = equity. All six participants mentioned a significant challenge in the educational system was funding. “Without the proper resources and budget, you cannot provide students' necessary support”, DeShawn said. DeShawn also felt schools should be on a level playing field (resources & funding), which could help eliminate teacher mobility and lower-rated schools. Hugo felt the state relied too much on

teachers being able to pick up the slack. He said I'm tired of hearing "teachers are making it work." He felt teachers should not have to make it work.

Teacher's Support. The participants felt teachers (their love, compassion, and dedication) were the primary support students received in the educational system. All six participants felt teachers went the extra mile to help their students; they gave them needed praise, helped them see school as a family/community (everyone is there to help them), and showed the school as a positive light. Hugo stated, "Our boots are the first ones on the ground," and students remembered two teachers, "the great ones and the really bad ones, a lot of teachers value and understand what impact they can have on somebody."

Role of the Education System. The participants felt the education system was a vital role in improving overall educational challenges. Some key points were to be purposeful in improvement plans, specific/meaningful training, and local accountability. All six participants felt school/districts needed to be intentional in creating improvement plans. DeShawn felt schools need[ed] to know what areas they were struggling in and "do better" to improve in those areas. Margarita felt Schools could do better if they saw that their job as "very important," since their job "contributes to the future of this country." The participants felt schools should focus on positive home/school relationships and programs that could improve academic rigor and success. DeShawn also thought that the school and the outside world should be more in twine so that students could understand school was a "small caveat of the real world" (student ID = driver's license, in-school suspension = jail, office = human resource department, and grades = money). Two

participants (DeShawn & Jenna) felt meaningful training was essential. DeShawn felt the training should focus on diversity, equity, and understanding students' unique circumstances. He felt one teacher could “bring a whole school system down,” and if that teacher “only wants to teach one type of student [they] need to go somewhere else,” if the training did not open their eyes. Jenna felt schools needed community training, meaning everyone on campus (janitors, cafeteria workers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, and teachers) all understood their role in building a positive school community – a smile and encouragement around every corner could go a long way.

Community Coping. The only community coping mechanism brought forward was overall awareness. All six participants recognized that parents and community members were becoming more aware of their role in building a better educational system. The participants felt community members and parents pulled together to buy playground equipment, volunteer for activities (brought their farm animals to campus to show the kids or spoke about their jobs), gather donations for supplies and clothing, or provide student tutoring (they did crafts with kids, read with kids, or helped them study their spelling words). Community members, parents, and schools were seeing the importance of being a team to promote education.

Family Dimension

This section will discuss the family dimension.

Challenges. A key family challenge mentioned by the participants was home instability. This home instability encompassed mobility, lacking one or both parents, multiple families in the home, no supervision, issues with finances, and legal issues. All

six participants recognized that the family challenges for their students revolved around instability in the home. Five of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) felt like the students moved around a lot (live with other friends/family or changed rent homes often due to eviction notices). Five of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt the home was often missing one of the parents due to divorce, lack of involvement, prison, or just living in another area. Wayne also recognized that sometimes the students struggled with the new step-parent causing them to feel unwelcomed or unsafe in their own home. Three participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Hugo) noticed the house was a revolving door of guests, and the effects for the child included interrupted sleep, lack of sleep, not having quiet place for homework, and feeling unsafe in their own home. Wayne felt there was not much supervision due to parent work schedules which resulted in inconsistent routines, no homework support, and possibly delinquent behaviors. All six participants felt the mobility and having many people in the home were partially due to financial inconsistencies (changing jobs, fired from jobs, or not having a job). Last, two participants (Jenna & Margarita) noticed that most CPS calls were for low socioeconomic families, and more low socioeconomic students spoke of a parent in jail or prison.

Teacher's Support. The educators all felt that family challenges were hard for them to address because “you can't dictate or control somebody's home” (Brandy). Still, educators could be part of a support system (emotional, behavioral, and academic) for their students and their students' families. All six educators talked about being there for their students by listening to their struggles, offering support and encouragement, and

trying to steer them in the right direction (sharing options with them for going to college and paying for college, options for specializing in a trade, and even how to build positive relationships with friends). Margarita said that students were at school, educators just needed to “help the kids focus on different things and having a peaceful day.” Hugo shared that it is so important that students knew “it’s not a race, it’s not about how fast you can finish [college], but that you finish.” He recognized that many of his students needed to work and maybe go to college half-time. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) also felt parents needed support. Brandy thought it was important to not “berate a parent” or “make them feel like they’re not doing enough, because at the end of the day, they were just doing the best that they can and the kids, that’s all they got.” DeShawn added that educators just needed to “be a person, that’s about it.” He felt people showed compassion naturally.

Role of the Education System. The participants were unsure how schools could help the wider family challenge, but a start would be classes for parents and plugging students into supportive resources (counselors or mentorships). Jenna exclaimed, “I don’t know how you address dysfunction [get mom off drugs or make dad visit their kids]; we can’t dictate their lives.” Three of the participants recommended educating parents. They felt homework support classes and maybe an orientation each school year about essential parent responsibilities (applying for scholarships, filling out a FAFSA, big school projects, or checking the grade portal or school website) would help improve the home environment. Last, one participant, DeShawn, felt it was important for schools to find and plug into necessary resources for students before they needed them (like a mentor

program for girls and boys or a counselor). That way, when or if a student needed them, schools could easily direct parents to those resources.

Community Coping. The participants felt families were coping with their family challenges by having multi-generations in a home, and students were coping by building positive friendships and participating in extracurriculars. Three of the participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Wayne) felt the parents realized that to support their family, they needed help, and therefore more than one generation lived in the same home (aunt, uncle, grandma, or cousin). When there was a crisis (someone goes to jail, deported, or loses a job), the participants noticed that other members of the family “take up the slack” (Wayne). Three participants (Jenna, Hugo, & Margarita) noticed students with unstable families saw the importance of quality, positive friendships. The participants felt it gave them an outlet and a sense of security. Jenna said the students worked to build “a community of friends at school.” Two of the participants (DeShawn & Wayne) found that students who had instability at home sought out extracurriculars, and this gave them “a sense of family” (DeShawn). In sports, Wayne said, the kids helped one another and supported one another. He felt it was an excellent positive outlet for them.

Neighborhood/Community Dimension

This section will cover the neighborhood/community dimension.

Challenges. The study participants noticed some key challenges students faced with the neighborhood and community they lived in. These challenges were feeling embarrassed, feeling unsafe, and feeling trapped. Two of the participants (Brandy & Wayne) felt students of poverty were often embarrassed by their home condition. Brandy

said, “I have seen some kind of shrink when talking about their homes.” Wayne and Brandy both acknowledged that the students see nicer homes on their bus route and recognize the difference from their own at an early age. Two participants (Hugo & Jenna) felt the students' neighborhoods were unsafe at times (muggings, drugs, shootings, & break-ins). Jenna recalled a student that felt it was necessary to carry a gun on him for protection when he and his little sister walked home from school (the school, aware of his fear and the safety issue of bringing a weapon to school, began taking him home every day). Four participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Margarita, & Wayne) noticed that students felt trapped by their neighborhoods (a wall they could not break through; no upward mobility visible). DeShawn said, “Economically disadvantaged kids live in an economically disadvantaged area.” He further stated, these kids “don't really [see] a positive light, then that negatively affects them.” All four of the participants recognized that who you were around impacted your life.

Teacher’s Support. All six participants felt like as an educator, the only thing you could do for neighborhood concerns was watching out for all of the students and give them love and encouragement. Brandy said she reminded her students that they were “not the place that [they] live”; instead, what matters was “what is on the inside and what is up here” (in their brain). Jenna felt the quiet students often needed the most help. She said some of the students “have some big problems.” The participants felt you just have to be there and show them love.

Role of the Education System. The participants discussed two prominent roles for the education system, presence in the community and showing students another

world. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Jenna, & Margarita) saw the value in building relationships in the students' community (game nights, performances-showcasing student talent, and social nights). DeShawn said, when the school is present in the student's community, you were saying, "We care about you at school, but we also care about you at home." Brandy said when schools celebrate these children and where and how they lived, "they start[ed] to feel secure in themselves." Three participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Wayne) recognized the importance of the education system providing opportunities for students to see the rest of the world outside of their neighborhood through field trips, films, art, and pictures. Brandy felt, "knowledge is power," and students needed to know a whole world was out there different from the one they resided in.

Community Coping. Student coping mechanisms for neighborhood and community challenges included gravitating to different environments and lying about their circumstances. Many of the participants (Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) were unsure how to describe any coping mechanisms students or families displayed in dealing with neighborhood/community challenges. One participant (DeShawn) felt students gravitated to friends from different environments. In other words, they sought out friends with resources, nicer homes, and transportation. Two participants (Brandy & Wayne) felt students lied to their peers to cope with their struggles. When studying neighborhoods in her first-grade class, Brandy mentioned that some of her low socioeconomic students would say I live in a brick house when they lived in a mobile home. Brandy could not believe how much they felt the stigma of their home at such an early age.

Psychological/Emotional Dimension

This section will discuss the psychological/emotional dimension of children subjected to poverty.

Challenges. The psychological/emotional challenges mentioned were emotional distress due to feeling inferior to peers and emotional distress from responsibility overload. All six participants considered this emotional distress from feeling inferior to classmates included feelings of embarrassment or shame about the home, their clothes, or the extra help they receive at school (resource class, small group instruction, or pull-out programs). Jayna also saw this emotional distress in her students when they showed up on the first day of school without all the supplies they needed for class. Wayne said students subjected to poverty often felt like, “What did I do to deserve this situation.” Five of the participants felt the students subjected to poverty suffered from emotional distress due to the weight of responsibility. This responsibility included caring for siblings, working, going to school, and maybe cleaning or preparing meals. Jayna felt they walked around with “the weight of the world on their shoulders,” and Margarita felt they “close [off] and they don't get the help they need.” With this extra stressful weight of responsibility, the participants felt the students shoved the emotions down deep inside and kept those feelings to themselves or exploded over possibly the most minuscule thing. The participants felt both reactions were unhealthy for the student.

Teacher's Support. The teachers recommended showing students empathy and providing regular check-ins to see how they were coping. Five of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) felt educators should show students

empathy. The educators suggested that offering a student empathy included having a caring conversation with them, letting them know you were here for them, focusing on building them up, showing them their strengths, and understanding their academic and emotional needs. Wayne felt a little different; he said, “I’m a hard dude, I’ve seen some hard stuff, I don’t want to hear your cry baby stories, suck it up and make [stuff] happen.” Wayne felt life could be challenging for these kids, but they got to realize they have to be the ones that make “their life a good life.” Five of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) felt students needed check-ins from an educator that was patient and empathetic to their circumstances. Brandy said, let these students know, “no matter what, I’m going to be here for you every day.” DeShawn added the importance of making a connection with your students (ask about their day, what they like, and their interests)– “Be somebody there who they feel like you’re interested in who they are and not what they have to do.” The participants felt these students needed to know, “their challenge is not their whole identity” (Jenna).

Role of the Education System. The participants felt the central role of the education system was an avenue to vent. All six participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt providing an avenue to vent was productive for students struggling with emotional distress. They felt some avenues for venting could be speaking with a counselor or teacher, a cooling-off room (quiet room with fidgets or stress balls), or physical activity (basketball, running, an exercise bike, or swinging). Jenna felt schools had to “focus on building them [students] up and keeping them in a good

emotional place.” Brandy said, “kids need headspace,” a place to get away, especially if they cannot get this at home.

Community Coping. Student coping mechanisms included emotional outlets. The participants felt parents were either not coping well or were seeking psychological/emotional help for their child from school resources. The participants did not recognize any community coping mechanisms for students with emotional or psychological distress. Five of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) felt students were coping due to a greater awareness of mental health, so they sought avenues to express themselves with teachers, counselors, or peers that they could open up to. Some of their coping mechanisms included journaling about their emotions, talking them out with someone, utilizing art, or utilizing music. Students could cope with emotional issues they faced when they knew “someone at the school cares or sees me” (DeShawn). Two of the participants (Brandy & Margarita) felt parents were coping with their child’s emotional distress by seeking help from counselors and teachers about how to help their child better. The other four participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) felt the students were not getting the support they needed from home; Wayne said, “the most help they're getting is from school, and there is only so much school can do.”

Physical Health Dimension

This section will discuss the physical health dimension of poverty.

Challenges. Some challenges the participants noticed about a child’s physical health were poor nutrition, irregular sleep, needing glasses, and environmental afflictions. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) noticed students of poverty fell

in two categories: lacking food or overweight. The participants felt that the food their students did have access to was unhealthy because “nutritional food costs more” (Margarita). DeShawn wished the cafeteria would fix to-go boxes for students instead of throwing good food in the trash each day (he recognized this as a policy issue). This food could go home with students who only had access to food at school. Irregular sleep was mentioned by three participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Jenna) as a physical health issue. These students were transported late at night from an aunt's home to their home, the home was often crowded, or people were in and out of the house at different times due to work schedules or other activities. Three of the participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Wayne) noticed that students either needed glasses because of the school eye exam findings or because of breaking them, and parents could not replace them. The last physical challenge was related to the environment the student lived in. Two participants (Hugo & Jenna) recognized some home environment factors that could cause minor or major illnesses for students (dirty carpet or pets aggravating their asthma, lice or scabies due to cleanliness, or insect bites from air gaps in the home or playing outside without repellent).

Teacher’s Support. To help with physical health challenges, educators felt they could offer healthy snacks, provide a little tender loving care (TLC), and promote sunshine and exercise. Two participants (Brandy & Margarita) felt teachers could provide healthy snacks at classroom parties, snack time during school, and as special treats. They felt that building awareness of healthy ways to snack or healthy things to eat could help students' build more beneficial habits long-term. One participant (Jenna) sometimes felt

students just needed a little tender loving care (TLC) like a wet paper towel, a band-aid, or a hug to help with those annoying bug bites or a bothersome wart that may be consuming their focus. Three of the participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Wayne) felt promoting outdoor activities and athletics were a great way to build healthy habits in their students. Hugo mentioned taking clipboards outside to do classwork or attend students' sporting events to "show support and encourage them to stay with it."

Role of the Education System. The participants felt the education system promoted physical health through physical education programs and athletic programs, healthy meals in the cafeteria, or nurse services and regular health screenings. All six participants mentioned the benefits of a reliable, well-funded physical education program. Deshawn noted that "PE may sometimes be the only exercise they get." Four participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Margarita, & Wayne) added the benefits of physical health through the athletic programs on campus. They felt the athletic program gave students access to physical therapy, sports trainers, and healthy exercise regimens. To help with physical health, four of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) felt the cafeteria on campus needed to provide healthy fresh options for students to eat for breakfast and lunch, as well as the food backpacks student could bring home for a weekend supply. Some healthy food ideas were fresh fruit and vegetables, baked foods, and less processed food. Last, three participants (Brandy, Jenna, and Wayne) recognized the school nurse's role in promoting physical health. They felt the nurse's vision and hearing screenings caught problems early on for students. They also mentioned the nurse had access to

vouchers for free or reduced-priced glasses. The nurse could also organize asthma buses, dental buses, and scoliosis checks through community partnerships.

Community Coping. Two participants (Jenna & Margarita) felt families were not coping well with physical health challenges. They felt students came to school without needed glasses, without required treatments for colds, and the kids may have lots of bug bites from being outside without bug repellent. The only community coping mechanisms brought forward were the community partnerships with schools. All six participants felt the community stepped up. Food was often provided for families in need, and many local business offices provided necessary hygiene supplies (toothpaste, toothbrushes, feminine products, deodorant, and other hygiene products) along with some form of presentation that promoted good hygiene.

Challenges Educators Faced

This section addresses the following research questions: Research question 3: What were the childhood experiences of successful educators who grew up in poverty? What cultural and social obstacles did they face? How were such obstacles overcome? Research question 4: What were the K-12 educational experiences of successful educators that grew up in poverty? What obstacles did they face in school? How were such obstacles negotiated? The focus of the analysis was on eleven dimensions: (1) social and historical, (2) financial and economical, (3) political, (4) ethnic and racial, (5) cognitive and academic, (6) school behavioral, (7) educational, (8) family, (9) neighborhood and community, (10) psychological and emotional, and (11) physical health. For each dimension, the participants were asked about (1) corresponding

challenges, (2) the coping mechanisms used by the participants, and (3) the people who helped the participant to cope with the challenges and how they helped.

The Social and Historical Dimension

This section will discuss the social and historical dimensions.

Challenges. The participants' social challenges with poverty were feelings of inferiority, alienation from classmates, and feeling as an outsider. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Jenna) felt inferior to their classmates. This feeling of inferiority came from embarrassment (phone lines disconnected, bringing generic chips to class parties, clothing from second-hand stores, or the home's poor quality and location) and lacking life experiences (ski trips, having a car, or receiving holiday gifts). One participant, Jenna, also felt alienated from classmates due to hygiene issues (no deodorant and having lice or unkempt hair). Jenna recalled that “socially was really awful... kids are not nice, they don’t understand ... I didn’t choose to be poor.” Three of the participants (Hugo, Jenna, & Johnny) felt like outsiders in the schools they attended. This feeling of being an outsider was typically a result of being the new kid on campus or attending a campus out of school zone. Hugo recalled, “I’m never going to forget leaving school [on the metro bus], this nice beautiful campus seeing these mansions all over, then hopping on the freeway exiting to all apartments, liquor stores with beer and cigarette signs outside.” The “visual cue is what led to my feelings” of being an outsider. One participant (Margarita) did not feel she experienced any social challenges in school. Margarita did attend a small school in a South American country.

The participants' historical challenges were generational poverty, living in a broken home, and difficulties with gaining residency or citizenship in the United States. Five of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) experienced generational poverty. The five participants were at minimum the second generation to grow up in poverty. Jenna mentioned she didn't "know of any relatives that ever did really well. My grandparents [could] pay their bills and put food on the table, but historically, our family's never been much better than that." All six participants mentioned they were first-generation college students. Four of the participants (DeShawn, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) came from broken homes. One participant (DeShawn) lived in a single-parent home (mom only), one participant (Margarita) moved in with her grandmother after her parents divorced, and two of the participants (Jenna & Wayne) were often bounced around between mom, dad, and a grandparent. Two of the participants (Hugo & Margarita) expressed their uneasiness about "la migra" until they became residents of the United States.

Coping Mechanisms. Some of the coping mechanisms the participants used with social and historical challenges were extracurricular activities, journaling, and building inner strength. Three participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Wayne) felt involvement in extracurriculars (karate, basketball, & football) helped them overcome their social and historical challenges. Through extracurriculars, they made friends, had a support system with the team and coaches, and were able to keep their minds busy and distracted from their current realities. Two of the participants (Brandy & Jenna) felt journaling was a coping mechanism for them. Brandy said she would take "everything I'm feeling and

thinking, good or bad, and write it down, and then I rip it up and throw it away... biggest release ever.” Four participants (DeShawn, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) mostly relied on their own inner strength when facing social and historical challenges. They felt they had to be tough, build themselves up, and find their own way to release the tension. Wayne said he “tried to be tough, don't let anything bother you, because [stuff] is going to happen again. You can't wallow on something when you know there's a pretty good chance it's fixing to happen again.”

Community Coping. The participants felt friends, family, and themselves helped coping through social and historical challenges. Two participants (Hugo & Jenna) felt friends who were going through similar circumstances helped them cope. They felt they seldom discussed specific circumstances in their lives with their friends, but just having a friend to spend time with was a coping mechanism. Three participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Margarita) felt siblings (Brandy) and grandparents (Jenna & Margarita) were a front-runner in their ability to cope. Margarita said her grandma “helped [her] to trace in [her] mind what [she] wanted to do and helped [her] to do it.” Brandy depended on her siblings because she was taught to “never talk about it with friends, what goes on in your home, it stays in your home.” Two of the participants (DeShawn & Wayne) felt they were their only help in coping with social and historical challenges. DeShawn said, “I had to cope by myself. I couldn't talk to anyone or talk to mom, so everything was all internal, all basically just me.”

The Financial and Economical Dimension

The section will discuss the financial and economic dimensions.

Challenges. Some of the participants' financial and economic challenges included disconnected utilities, minimal money for clothing or necessities, and financial instability. Three participants (Brandy, Jenna, and Wayne) experienced periods of time when the utilities (phone, electric, or water) were shut off to their home, or they did not have the money to refill their propane tank. Brandy could remember coming home from school, “and you go inside, and it's quiet. You're like, oh, man, the lights [are] cut off.” The participants also recalled times they took cold showers, froze during the winter, and ate cold food because the utilities were disconnected. All six participants recognized that their families had minimal money for necessities (food, clothing, and furnishings) or activities (homecoming, prom, and extracurriculars). They recalled periods of time where they had to dumpster dive for furniture (Hugo), collect money from the car wash for groceries (Jenna), have multiple families in the home to help with the bills (Hugo), and shop at thrift stores for clothing (all participants). Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) mentioned getting only one pair of shoes for an entire school year. Wayne said, life “was more about survivability.” Brandy felt they “had to curve expenses,” and DeShawn explained it as, “basically you're broke, live a life while broke, and don't do a lot of stuff.”

Four of the participants (Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt there was a lot of financial instability in the home due to job changes, poor money management, or a language barrier. Wayne expressed that they were “feast or famine, we'd be up, and then we would nose dive where we had nothing.” Margarita's family, coming from a farming community, relied heavily on crop production and distribution for financial stability, and

many factors affected this (bugs, weather, and theft). Jenna felt that even as a child, she had to monitor the mailbox for the food stamps because if her mom got to them first, “she would trade them for money and then [they] wouldn’t have enough to get groceries that month.” Hugo felt his dad could not get ahead at work until his English improved. His language barrier made business negotiations and honest transactions difficult.

Coping Mechanisms. The participants felt they coped with financial and economic challenges by accepting their parents were doing the best they could, starting working at an early age (14+), or feeling they had to become parents in the home. Three participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Margarita) felt their caregivers were doing their best to provide for their families. They just accepted the ways things were and tried not to be a burden by asking for things they knew their parents/grandparents could not afford. Two participants (DeShawn & Wayne) started jobs early to purchase things they felt they needed or wanted. DeShawn acknowledged that “nobody's going to give me money, nobody's gonna give me anything, and I’m not gonna steal it, so I need to go and get it [a job] and take care of business, get it done.” DeShawn further stated, “My mom, she gave me a place to stay and food to eat, anything extra, it was on me.” One participant, Jenna, felt she had to become the parent. Jenna said, “I learned when resources came (food stamps), and I would make out the grocery list.” Jenna knew how much milk, cereal, bread, etc., the family needed to survive until the next month.

Community Coping. The participants felt their family, the school, and the government helped them cope with financial and economic challenges. Four of the participants (Brandy, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) mentioned a family member (parent,

aunt, siblings, or grandmother) that was a coping mechanism for them in overcoming financial and economic challenges. For Brandy, it was her parents and siblings that helped her to understand, “there [are] people who didn’t have this and they don’t have that, and they would just explain it to [her] the best they [could] the real world of what [was] happening.” Jenna and Margarita felt grandparents and aunts were key for coping. Margarita said her family “made it look like [they] weren’t having such a difficult time.” Wayne also mentioned an aunt that would make holidays special. “She would bring us something cool, a good present, make it [the holiday or birthday] a little bit special.” Jenna also felt the school, through free breakfast and lunch, and the government (providing food stamps & Medicaid) were coping mechanisms that reduced the financial burden.

The Political Dimension

This section will discuss the political dimension.

Challenges. Some participants experienced challenges with obtaining legal status and with a parent’s incarceration, while other did not experience any political/legal challenges. Two of the participants (Hugo & Margarita) discussed the constant fear of being undocumented while obtaining residency. Hugo recounted the memory of becoming a US resident. He said,

I flew in an airplane to El Paso to cross the border into Juarez, and then from Juarez, I went to get my paperwork at the US embassy and then across the border again. For the first time, I crossed as a US resident, and so that was pretty cool. It

was the first time we ever took a trip, but still, even with residency papers, you feel like La Migra is the boogeyman.

Two of the participants (DeShawn & Wayne) experienced their father being incarcerated. DeShawn's dad was in prison most of his life. DeShawn said drugs and alcohol were prevalent in the home when his dad was around. Wayne said he watched his dad go to jail a couple of times, usually "because of his drinking and belligerent behavior" (shot a gun off in town, jerked out a fence, and once a man had a knife to his throat at Wayne's home). Two of the participants (Brandy & Jenna) did not recall any legal or political challenges in their family.

Coping Mechanisms. For the participants that recalled political or legal challenges, they coped through self-motivation and hope. Two of the participants (DeShawn & Wayne) felt that they were motivated to make different choices by observing their fathers' legal challenges. Deshawn said, "let me just say, it wasn't that it wasn't an issue. It was a motivating factor, but nobody helped me deal with it. [I] dealt with it myself." DeShawn and Wayne worked hard in school because they knew they wanted a different life. Two of the participants (Hugo & Margarita) came to the US with the hope of becoming a US resident. Margarita recalled the extortion, guerilla activity, and violence that made her leave her country. She felt she had a better/safer life in the US.

Community Coping. Those who helped the participants cope with these legal/political challenges were family, friends, and themselves. One participant (Hugo) felt his parents helped with gaining his residency in the US. One participant (Margarita)

felt friends helped her to cope with her residency fears. She said, “many friends were getting their VISA by being a bilingual teacher.” She decided to follow in their path. The other two participants (DeShawn & Wayne) felt they were self-motivated. DeShawn said, “nobody helped me deal with it [dad in prison]. Dealt with it myself.”

The Ethnic and Racial Dimension

This section will discuss the ethnic and racial dimensions.

Challenges. Many of the participants attended very diverse schools and noted that racial and ethnic challenges were not prevalent. Those who recounted ethnic and racial challenges said they were made to feel inferior due to their race or made to feel like an outsider in their own culture. Two of the participants (Jenna & Margarita) felt they never experienced any racial or ethnic challenges as a child. Three participants (Brandy, DeShawn, & Wayne) shared a time they were made to feel inferior due to their skin color. Brandy remembered an incident in high school when a white female teacher told a white male student,

Hey, there is a luncheon for the Who’s Who [of American High School Students], and I said I’m in Who’s Who, and she [the teacher] said, yeah right, you're lying. I said I am, and she was like, yeah, right and waved me away, and so it just made me feel really sad inside, and I didn't know why she did it. I questioned did she do that because I'm black? Did she do that because she thinks I'm not smart? Why did she do that to me? I never knew why she did it. It stuck with me because the way she made me feel. She made me feel so little...It made me view her differently.

DeShawn said he mostly felt inferior outside of school. He said, “I’m not an idiot, you know, I knew I couldn’t do certain things or I have to be careful when I’d go to the mall” (people walking around you keeping an eye on you). He felt he kept “his radar down” (no dreads/low cut hair), so he felt he “was never a threatening-looking black guy to cause alarm from other people.” He said, “just basic stuff other races don’t have to have those same discussions and be aware of.” Wayne shared a third-grade experience. He was a white male in a majority-black school and recalled: “three black boys beat me up for no reason on the playground.” He was not sure if it was because he was white. He did feel being small made him an easy target.

Two participants (DeShawn & Hugo) had experiences where they felt like outsiders in their own culture. DeShawn expressed that he went to a very diverse high school and his classmates all pretty much got along, but he would hear “the normal, you know, people kept saying what, you the token black guy hanging out with the white dudes or the white people? Yeah [DeShawn would respond], I’m riding in cars too, you know, whatever you know.” He mentioned he did gravitate a lot to the white people because they had more resources (cars). He said, “I hung out with the black people too. I hung out with my kind also, quite often, so there was no just one group I hung around with.” Hugo mentioned that for his parents to learn English, they had to speak it more heavily in the home, and he started losing his Spanish. Then when he was around his Spanish speaking friends whose “handling of the Spanish language in [his] community was better than [his],” he began feeling like an outsider. Two participants (Jenna & Margarita) could not remember any racial or ethnic challenges as a child subjected to

poverty. Jenna said, “I don’t remember [race] ever being on my mind as a kid.”

Margarita, coming from a small community in South America, said, “no problems, where I grew up we were all the same...we no mix.”

Coping Mechanisms. To cope, the participants moved on, got tough, or observed what was deemed appropriate (through friends and television). Two participants (Jenna & Margarita) noted no experiences to require a coping mechanism. Brandy felt you just cope; you move on. She said, “I was quiet, and it really didn’t happen a lot.” DeShawn said, “through observation and experience, you get the gist of what you need to do.” Wayne said, “no coping; you just have to be tough.”

Community Coping. Only one participant (DeShawn) recognized a friend as a means of coping, and everyone else said no one helped them cope. Brandy said no one was even aware of her circumstances. She said, “I didn’t say anything. I wouldn’t say anything.” DeShawn said he had one really good friend he shared personal things with, but he felt he mostly just dealt with things himself.

The Academic and Cognitive Dimension

This section will discuss the academic and cognitive dimensions.

Challenges. The participants expressed that they struggled academically due to home instability, a language barrier, a learning disability, or lacking technology. Two of the participants (Jenna & Wayne) felt home instability (moving around or parents in and out of work) contributed to school academic challenges. Wayne expressed that schools “often place[d] [him] in lower classes until they realized what [he] could do... if [he] stayed long enough.” One participant (Hugo) felt his language barrier affected his

academics. Hugo didn't learn to read or write until second grade because Spanish was his primary language. Three of the participants were diagnosed with a learning disability (Brandy in reading and math, and Hugo and Jenna in math) that required pull-out classes, small group instruction, or summer school. Brandy recalled when she first explained to her math teacher how she got the answer to a math problem right, she had to explain to the teacher line by line how she did the problem and the teacher's face "was like squished up... [the teacher] just looked at [Brandy] then she looked at the paper." Brandy said, "in that point, [I] felt different." Brandy questioned, was she an "alien?" She said she always "had to work a little harder, and she was just a little different." One participant (Hugo) felt his "biggest hindrance" academically was lacking technology (no computer or printer) in the home. Hugo would have to go to school early or stay late to write papers or complete anything that required the internet.

The participants felt the cognitive challenges included an inability to focus, laziness, or a home environment that did not promote education. Two of the participants (Jenna & Margarita) discussed focus issues in school. The participants expressed that it was difficult to focus at school because of home circumstances (family trauma, no food, or wondering where one would be living). Jenna said she had "good and bad days. On good days, [she] could sit and focus and be a superstar student, but then there was a lot that went on [at home] that took away from [her ability to focus]." Margarita experienced losing a sister during high school. This tragedy caused her to "go blank for a whole year... [she] was in shock." She felt her challenge was "to concentrate and... to continue learning." One participant (DeShawn) expressed that he was an extremely lazy student.

DeShawn felt he “was good at being lazy.” He said once a teacher told him he “would probably have an A in [her] class if [he] just stayed awake” (He stayed up playing basketball or watching tv really late). Three participants (DeShawn, Jenna, & Wayne) felt education was not a priority in their home. The three participants felt they could not get help with schoolwork, nor did anyone at the home check on their school progress. Jenna said, “no one at home pushed academics... mom didn't care.”

Coping Mechanisms. The participants expressed that their coping mechanism included an internal drive to do better (sought out resources- books, teachers, supplies, peers, or studied intensely). All six of the participants mentioned an internal drive to improve. Hugo mentioned getting to school early to utilize a computer, math calculator, or printer. Three participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Jenna) sought out teachers or peers to tutor them in a struggling area. Wayne said he would hear on tv, “education is going to set you free; education is going to get you better... and well [he] wanted to be better.” Therefore, he “always studied. [He] loved school. [He] never wanted to be ill-prepared, and [he] never wanted to look dumb.”

Community Coping. The participants recognized that teachers, peers, and guardians (parents or grandparents) often helped them cope with their academic and cognitive challenges. Five participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt their teachers devoted time, worked with them in small groups, or provided them with necessary resources (computer access, calculator, or a printer), which helped to improve their academic achievement. Brandy said, having “a few magical teachers” were how she coped. Jenna recalled an algebra teacher that personally approached her in class and said,

I would like you to stay for tutorials this week so that we can work on blah, blah, blah. It was very specific, and she would invite people personally. Of course, I was always invited but had she not personally invited me; I would not have stayed.

Wayne said, “sometimes teachers can do things, and the student doesn't know” they were doing it specifically to help them (the student). Two of the participants (DeShawn & Margarita) felt peers helped them cope with academic/cognitive challenges. Margarita said she remembered friends coming to her house after her sister died and saying, “Let’s do the homework together so that we do it correctly.” Four participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, & Margarita) felt a family member offered them the support they needed academically. Hugo's mom sought out resources to help him even though language was a barrier when communicating with Hugo's teachers. Hugo said she just found the Spanish teacher on campus and would ask her for help. Jenna remembered moving in with her grandfather in 8th grade because she was failing math. Her grandfather told the principal, “there was no sense in punishing [Jenna] for things that were not in [her] control.” Instead, he told the principal, “he would personally see to [her] math education” if they would not hold her back for that one subject.

The School Behavioral Dimension

The section will discuss the school behavioral dimension.

Challenges. The participants described their school behavioral challenges as withdrawal, attention seeking, and having anger issues. Two of the participants (Brandy & DeShawn) did not feel poverty was “a driving factor” (DeShawn) in their behavior.

Brandy and DeShawn both expressed occasionally being silly in class but said they never experienced any major behavior issues. Brandy said her “parents were strict, so [she] knew better.” One participant (Jenna) described herself as “withdrawn and quiet.” Jenna said she did not speak at school unless she was spoken to, and between classes, she would just sit by her locker and read. One participant (Margarita) said her behavior issues began in high school, and they were “attached to the pain” of losing her sister. She described sitting in the back of the class and talking, clowning, or whatever “to get the attention.” Two of the participants (Hugo & Wayne) felt their behavior issues (fighting) stemmed from built-up anger. Hugo was dealing with his dad's family wanting him to quit school to help his family with bills and his “worst fear,” being kicked out of his magnet school for failing math and sent to his zoned school. Wayne said he was in “13 fights” at one school. He said, “99% of those fights were self-defense.”

Coping Mechanisms. The participants' coping mechanisms were an internal desire to do better, changing the environment, and being tough. Four participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Jenna, & Margarita) felt they coped internally. Margarita said she “wanted to do better and didn’t want to live bad[ly].” Jenna said she “escaped into a book” to distract her, and DeShawn said he hated missing recess. One participant (Hugo) felt his behavioral outbursts (fighting in school or skipping school) changed when he was relocated to an early college high school where he felt comfortable again (felt like teachers and counselors cared about his success). Last, one participant (Wayne) said, “there was nothing [he] could do but get tough.”

Community Coping. The participants felt teachers or family helped them recover from behavioral issues. Four of the six participants (Brandy, Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) mentioned a teacher impacting their behavior change. Brandy said the one time in middle school that she acted out, a teacher approached her and said, “get yourself together.” Brandy said, “teacher’s words, they stick with you.” Jenna had a transformational experience in high school. A band teacher requested her to be his teacher’s aide after she started a new school. He observed her always reading at her locker day after day and not interacting with anyone. Jenna said he “brought her out of her shell,” and as an aide, she had “to constantly talk to the kids that were in band, bring them things, interact with them... [she] enjoyed being in that environment.” Wayne felt teachers would notice he was being bullied and “cut [him] some slack.” Two of the participants (Brandy & Margarita) felt their family helped them cope with behavioral challenges. Brandy said her siblings could say, “I’m going to tell momma, and that was all it took. I’m not doing it anymore.” Margarita said her family sat her down and said, “We know you’re in pain...if you don’t fix this behavior, this is the consequences.”

The Educational Dimension

This section will discuss the educational dimension.

Challenges. Some of the participants' educational challenges were suffering academic gaps, lack of resources, and feeling singled out by teachers or peers. Two participants (Jenna & Wayne) felt school mobility caused gaps in their education or wrongful placement. Wayne said every time he started a new school; the school would place him “with the low ones.” Wayne said, “this was tough because I knew I wasn’t

stupid. I knew I didn't belong there.” Jenna too noticed that “when you moved schools... [there were] some gaps where you know maybe [you] missed a certain unit. It hadn't been done at one school, and it had already been done in another.” Three participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Margarita) felt an overall educational challenge was a lack of resources (lacked technology or study materials or books at home) that gave other students an advantage, especially at a younger age. DeShawn said, “no one was reading to me at home, no books at home, no video games, no little league, no study materials... so your lacking several resources that take you from here [bottom] to here [top].” Three of the participants (Brandy, Hugo, & Jenna) felt the educational system singled them out or brought attention to their struggles (being in poverty). Jenna said she always felt it was “a loaded question” when teachers would ask students to write about what they got or did over a holiday. She said all the students would write about things and share things that “were not attainable for [her] at all,” so she would make up stuff to share. Brandy felt isolated by her clothing. She said she only got two new outfits a school year. She felt “standardized dress was the best thing to ever happen to kids... because nobody knows who got what.” Zoned schools also may not provide the highest rigor, so DeShawn and Hugo both rode the metro bus at a young age to a school outside their neighborhood which Hugo shared often made him feel “like an outsider at home and at school.”

Coping Mechanisms. The participants shared that they coped with these educational challenges internally or through counseling. Four of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Jenna, & Wayne) felt they worked through their challenges internally, “just dealt with it... not going to use it as a woe is me... that wasn't going to be my situation”

(DeShawn). One of the participants (Hugo) felt counseling helped him deal with “issues [in school] that [he] didn't know what to do with.”

Community Coping. The participants mentioned that teachers or counselors helped them to cope. All of the participants mentioned teachers helped them to feel comfortable at school, tried different techniques to help them succeed academically, or brought to light their “strengths instead of just focusing on their weaknesses” (Jenna). One participant (Hugo) felt counseling helped him “to see what others are going through- [and this is when his] attitude changed.” He no longer felt people were trying to slight him if they were not helping him.

The Family Dimension

This section will discuss the family dimension.

Challenges. Two of the participants (Brandy & Hugo) were raised with both parents in the home and with what they felt was a positive support system. The participants' family challenges included being raised in a broken home, parental alcohol or drug abuse/legal issues, manipulative/selfish behaviors by a parent, pressure to help support the family, or being a latchkey kid. Four participants (DeShawn, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) grew up in a broken home (single-parent home, lived with a grandparent, or parents married and divorced multiple times). Jenna said, “not having my dad around a lot was a challenge.” Her mom moved them around every few months, so they were often a few hours away from her dad. Margarita’s parents divorced when she was four. She moved in with her grandma (paternal). Margarita did not see her mom again until she was 16, but her dad frequently visited.

Two of the participants (DeShawn & Wayne) grew up with a father with an alcohol or drug abuse problem. Wayne said his dad was a bad alcoholic and would be “gone... for three or four days, now knowing where he’s at and then he would come home.” Then it was “three of four days of just massive fighting, massive arguments [between the mom and dad]- this cycled.” DeShawn got a call around 6:30 one morning before school. He hadn’t heard from his dad in months. His dad said,

Hey, I’m back here [prison]. I said okay, hung up, and went to school. I didn’t tell anybody. I just went about normal life and used that as my motivation- this is not gonna happen to me. I’m not going to be this.

Two of the participants (Jenna & Wayne) felt one or more parents often participated in selfish/manipulative acts. For example, Jenna said decisions were purely based on her mom's “happiness and her whim.” Jenna said it was not uncommon to move far away on a whim because her mom was “mad” at Jenna's grandparents or dad. Jenna’s mom would pull her and her siblings from school to dumpster dive for cans, so she (the mom) could have Taco Bell. Wayne said his parents “lived like gypsies,” just up and go with no regard to what the children needed. During high school, one of the participants (Hugo) felt a tremendous amount of pressure from his dad's family to quit school and help his family with the bills. Hugo said his dad's family would say, “You're a dude. Why aren't you working manual labor and bringing money to help out your parents?” He felt that his dad's family viewed him as “an ungrateful little kid.”

Two of the participants (Brandy & Hugo) had parents that worked many hours each week (day and night shifts), requiring them (Brandy & Hugo) to arrive home from

school before a parent made it home from work. Hugo said, “I got off the bus to an empty house as a young elementary kid. My parents weren't deadbeats; they're just trying to do the best they can. They're at work.” Brandy even recalled that her parent's work schedules often required them to miss important events (graduations or holidays). Brandy said, “It was kind of sad because you wanted them to there, but they had to work.”

Coping Mechanisms. The participants' coping mechanism included using distractions (reading, fishing, interacting with siblings, visiting friends, or working). All six participants took advantage of and appreciated escape avenues (reading, fishing, writing, playing with siblings, visiting friends, or working). Jenna said, “If I could get away from my mom, I got away.” Wayne said fishing and work were “an escape.” Jenna and Brandy felt writing allowed her an outlet for coping.

Community Coping. The participants expressed that siblings, family members, and friends helped them to cope. Four participants (Brandy, Hugo, Margarita, & Wayne) relied on encouragement from other family members, for Brandy and Wayne, siblings were a coping mechanism. Wayne said he and his sister would go outside and play to escape “and forget about all that crap” (fighting between the parents in the home). Margarita said she “just stay[ed] with who like[d] her and who made her happy” (her grandma and aunts). One of the participants (DeShawn) relied on friends and their friend's families to help cope with family challenges. DeShawn said he “had attachments to other people and their families” since he “didn't have family.” One of the participants (Hugo) coped with the help of his dad. Hugo said he knew his “dad wanted [him] to get

[his] education,” so he would just block out what everyone else (his dad's family) was saying.

The Neighborhood and Community Dimension

This section will discuss the neighborhood and community dimensions.

Challenges. Challenges noted by participants were feeling unsafe, being an outsider, and dealing with poor condition of the home. Two of the participants (Margarita & Wayne) were exposed to unsafe incidents in their neighborhood. Margarita, growing up in a South American farming community, experienced “regular delinquency.” People that did not want to work would ask for money, and “you would have to pay to be able to go outside, go to your farm, or do the activities.” She further explained that the delinquents' “mouths were big,” meaning they took much (food and money) and families suffered. Wayne experienced a lot of break-ins while living in “crappy motels and apartments.” He said, “Normal folks don’t deal with stuff like that” (Wayne’s 12-year old sister had a 38-pistol pointed at the door while a man was trying to break in). Wayne said he saw “bodies wheeled out” after an upstairs apartment shooting. His best times “were in the country- not the city- as long as it was rural, it was okay.” One of the participants (Hugo) was made to feel like an outsider by his neighborhood friends. Hugo said, “people in his neighborhood treated him differently.” Hugo said they would comment, “He goes to that fancy school... He thinks he's better than us.” Two of the participants (Jenna & Wayne) felt the homes they lived in were less than par (no heat in the winter, no AC in the summer, cockroaches). Jenna said she lived in “trailers and shacks that [were] barely livable.” Wayne said, “living was horrible.” The other two participants (Brandy &

DeShawn) felt no challenges were present. DeShawn said, “We all hung out with each other... safety wasn't compromised.” He said, “we weren't broke thugs, just broke.”

Coping Mechanisms. The participants felt they did not cope independently but instead depended on the support they received from others. The section below will discuss this further.

Community Coping. The participants felt friends, family members, and the community helped cope with neighborhood challenges. Two of the participants (DeShawn & Hugo) said friends were their support. DeShawn said, “We all kind of knew our situation and just kind of hung out with each other and [tried] to do what we can to make the best of it.” Hugo said he stopped hanging out with the neighborhood kids. His mom would drive him to see his early college friends. He said, “I think part of her didn't like me hanging out too much with the kids in the neighborhood.” Three participants (Brandy, Jenna, & Margarita) felt they had a lot of community support. Brandy and Margarita's family lived in the same neighborhood their whole life, and everyone knew everybody. Margarita said, “If a family [were] hit, other families would share with them.” Jenna felt she was “raised by a village.” Her aunts and grandparents often lived on the same street and would let her play “musical houses” for dinner or just to getaway. One participant (Wayne) felt his sister helped him cope. She understood what he was going through, and they could go outside “and just kind of get away from it for a little while.”

The Psychological and Emotional Dimension

This section will discuss the psychological and emotional dimensions.

Challenges. The participants expressed feelings of emotional distress tied to being worried (worried about food, living arrangements, starting another new school, translating communication with parents, and escaping poverty), embarrassed (clothing, appearance, and pull-out classes), and unsettled (moved a lot, things were taken away a lot [from moving, repossessed, or stolen], and a lack of emotional attachment to a parent). Five of the participants (DeShawn, Hugo, Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) felt they worried about many things (worried about food, living arrangements, starting another new school, translating communication with parents, and escaping poverty). Jenna said, “there was always a lot more on my mind than just going to school and doing my work...I always worried about home. Would we move? Would we have food?” Hugo felt immigrant families “did not realize how much stress they put onto [their] children” when they place them in the middle of negotiations (parent and doctor, parent and teacher, or parent and electric company). Hugo felt he had a “middle school education trying to translate words [he] didn't even understand to [his] parents.” Wayne said, “the ceiling” was always there. Wayne worried “there [were] only certain things people like [him] were gonna be able to achieve... that stuck with [him] until the service” (Wayne joined the service right out of high school).

Embarrassment was mentioned by three of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, & Jenna). Brandy and Jenna were both embarrassed about being pulled for academic support. Brandy said, “you didn't want anyone to know you needed the help.” DeShawn and Jenna both experienced being picked on and teased at school (worn-out shoes and not having many clothes).

Three of the participants (DeShawn, Jenna, & Wayne) felt unsettled. DeShawn said,

not having both parents in the household, you struggle with that, seeing what a proper, a so-called proper family demographic is supposed to be... you only got one parent and then, one parent that don't really talk, you know... just fending really for [yourself]... Just on my own leaves you pretty unsettled inside.

Wayne said his mom would say,

If I [could] do all this over again, I'd never have none of y'all." Wayne said, "Daddy took me fishing a lot... and then at the end of the day, just go right back to the living with grandparents or living somewhere like that [with mom] and the whole time he was dropping me off, I'm thinking, why does it have to be this way?"

He did not understand why he had to stay where he did not feel wanted. Jenna said she "never felt settled," and she felt "she walked around with this weight that [she] bore on her own," which left "a permanent scar... and took its toll psychologically."

Coping Mechanisms. Some participants' coping mechanisms included focusing on the positive and using distractions (getting a job, going to a friend's house, or going to school). Other participants did not have coping mechanisms. Three participants (Brandy, Margarita, & Wayne) did not feel they coped well with their psychological/emotional challenges. Brandy said, "I just moved on, I don't know if there's a way to cope; it's just you want something, [and] you can't have it. Nothing I could do about it." Similarly, Wayne felt, "this is the way it is; there's nothing you can do about it." One participant,

(Jenna) felt it was important to stay focused on the positive. Jenna said, “I just put it aside... nobody wants to hear this [the negative in her life]; nobody needs to hear this.” Three participants (DeShawn, Hugo, & Jenna) coped by distracting themselves with other activities (school, work, friends, or TV). One of the participants (DeShawn) got a job, so he could “buy better clothes and shoes, so; [he] wouldn't be embarrassed.” DeShawn also said he watched a lot of comedies, “stuff to make me laugh,” and just stayed away from home “as much as [he] could.” Jenna said, “school was my safe place, it was my consistent place.”

Community Coping. The participants felt they coped alone or with the help of friends, teachers, and family. Only one participant (Brandy) felt they coped alone. Brandy said, “you don't share that with everybody. You kind of keep that to yourself.” One participant (Hugo) mentioned that he found “camaraderie” with someone “that was going through the exact same thing” (feelings of isolation). One participant (Jenna) mentioned a teacher that was “observant and realized [she] needed support.” Three of the participants (Jenna, Margarita, & Wayne) mentioned a family member “that would give them breaks” (Jenna) or “made them feel safe just being with them” (Margarita).

The Physical Health Dimension

This section will discuss the physical health dimension.

Challenges. The participants mentioned they did not receive routine checkups, they suffered from environmental afflictions, and they did not eat a healthy diet. All six participants recalled going to a doctor or dentist only if something was wrong (toothache, sick, or needed stitches). Four of the participants (Brandy, DeShawn, Margarita, &

Wayne) recalled only needing a dentist a couple of times and, other than that being pretty healthy children. Jenna said she had this mentality that “doctors only have bad things to say,” so she hated going. Three participants (Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) suffered from environmental afflictions (lice, allergies, athlete's foot, or anxiety). Jenna felt her environment caused her to suffer from “a lot of anxiety... and lots of nightmares.” Jenna also was sent home from school with lice often, got athlete's foot, and suffered from terrible allergies. Wayne mentioned his parents smoked in the car, and the kids would say, “I can't breathe, and stuff, and [their] mom would get mad because she would have to roll the window down.” Hugo said he was a “sickly kid” (bronchitis and asthma). Three participants (Hugo, Jenna, & Wayne) felt their diet was very limited in nutritional value (potatoes, Vienna sausage, spaghetti-o's, or cereal).

Coping Mechanisms. The only coping mechanisms mentioned were going to the doctor when needed and looking forward to school days for breakfast and lunch. All six participants felt a family member would always take them to the doctor or dentist if something were hurting or bothering them. Two of the participants (Hugo & Jenna) said they “looked forward to good food at school” (Hugo).

Community Coping. The participants mentioned school (hot breakfast and lunch), and their family (taking them to the doctor as needed) helped them cope.

Stories of Becoming an Educator

This section addresses the following research question: Research question 5: Why do successful educators who grew up in poverty decide to pursue an education degree and career? The participants were asked (1) Why did you decide to pursue an education-

related degree? (2) Why did you decide to pursue a K-12 education career? (3) Do you think an educator should have experienced poverty to best support an economically disadvantaged K-12 student? Could you please elaborate? (4) What do you think is a crucial element to supporting an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?

Brandy

Brandy originally went to school for business despite her mom thinking her personality was more suited for a nurse or a teacher. Once she started the business degree, it just “didn't make sense,” and at the time, she was working as a nanny for her nieces and nephews and began to feel teaching made more sense for her. Brandy decided she wanted to help other kids like she helped her nieces and nephews. She pursued a career in teaching because she wanted to support other students in “not just academics but also the social/emotional side” of learning. Brandy said, “I wanted to help kids, and I thought I would be good at it.” Brandy did not feel an educator should have experienced poverty to support economically disadvantaged K-12 students. She did think educators needed to be “empathetic, not sympathetic” and be “realist.” She said as an educator, she has learned “that kids grow up so differently.” Brandy felt most people probably think others had a similar experience to their own, but “no, the things that they [the students] experience” can be “bad or rough” and beyond what the educator may have experienced. The most crucial element to support students that grow up economically disadvantaged, according to Brandy, was believing in them. Brandy felt educators needed to let students know, “they are special, and they are worthy.” Too many times, they “don't have hope. They don't have someone saying nice and positive things to them.”

DeShawn

Originally, DeShawn received a degree in marketing. He had always considered teaching as something he would do in retirement, so he could “give back to the community.” when his work in marketing started to suffer, he decided to pursue education a little sooner. DeShawn decided to pursue a career in education for “more stability in a job.” Plus, he wanted to give back, and he shared that teaching has been good. He felt schools needed black male teachers, so he was glad he could be the guy on campus that represents that demographic. DeShawn did not feel an educator needed to experience poverty to be able to reach economically disadvantaged students. He said, instead, you “just have to be understanding, [have] an open mind, ... empathy, and listen.” He said, “we [children that grew up in poverty] just want [educators] to understand where we are coming from...the struggle is a little harder for us at times or has been.” The one crucial element necessary to support an economically disadvantaged student, according to DeShawn, was “empathy.” He said, “that one-word kinda wraps it all up... understand that their life at home is different from what you might know, or what you might have been through... a little more understanding... a little more patience.”

Hugo

Hugo knew he loved history and art, so that was what he studied in college. Unsure of what he wanted to do after college, he started tutoring his high school principal's son. The principal asked him for his resume, and then Hugo ended up in education. Hugo decided to accept a job at an early college high school since early

college specifically had a “big impact on [his] life.” Hugo felt that sometimes if an educator grew up in poverty, it could be a “hindrance.” Hugo felt it was important that educators not assume that a connection would help them bond with their tough students. He said, instead, you may “push them further away because they feel so insulted.” He felt teachers could share incidences in their own life, “but not assume it lined up” with a student's circumstances. Hugo felt students should not “feel like it was sad to be who [they] were.” Hugo felt a crucial element for supporting economically disadvantaged students was “empathy, not sympathy.” He thought it was important for students to feel like teachers do things for them because “that's what teachers do,” and not because the student is poor. He said we “don't want to alienate” students, nor do we want them to “feel like they're a burden.”

Jenna

Jenna always loved English and literature and knew she wanted to be “immersed in that world.” She received her training in secondary education. After graduation, she had her first baby and realized how much she really liked younger kids, so she went back to school to earn her elementary education certification. Jenna felt she decided to pursue an education career because she always had “a little bit of a teaching spirit.” She said she has always loved “the whole learning process.” She loved school and would play school and librarian as a child. Out of college, Jenna felt insecure about pursuing a Master's degree but feels she's ready now and plans to start in the coming year. Jenna, when asked if an educator should have experienced poverty to best support an economically disadvantaged K-12 student, said, “not necessarily.” She felt being in poverty “doesn't

automatically make you a good teacher [and] not being in poverty, [the] same thing, [instead] you got to care about the kids... and know what to look for.” Jenna felt it was important to be “specific and intentional with your help and your interactions.” Jenna did feel growing up in poverty allowed her “a good perspective,” but she also realized that “some have it a lot worse than [she] had it and some things [she] can't relate to.” Jenna said the most crucial element to supporting an economically disadvantaged student was “being flexible.” She acknowledged that these students “are going to have good days and bad days.” Jenna felt these students might need more time to get where you need them to be, so rigid timelines may not show their true potential, therefore, leading to a misdiagnosis for some of them. She felt students that grow up in “high-stress environments” are affected the most by the rigorous standards.

Margarita

Margarita came to the United States 18 years ago with an engineering degree. She knew very little English and had very few resources. Margarita said she never planned to become a teacher, but “God guided [her] a different way.” She obtained a VISA to work as a bilingual teacher. Margarita said she “did not understand what [she] was doing as a teacher, but [she] worked really hard.” She went back to school in the US and obtained a Master's degree in educational leadership. She felt the Master's degree helped her to understand so much more about what she needed to do to help her students. She felt her situation (being an immigrant) was the guiding factor in pursuing an education career. It was the “best way to get in the system and live better.” Margarita said “she feels sad to confess” why she became a teacher and to cope with that, she goes to her classroom

every day and “does the best [she] can for the kids and for the teachers on her team.” She said becoming a teacher has been “a bless[ing] for [her], and she hopes [she] has been a bless[ing] for many kids.” Margarita felt teachers did not necessarily have to grow up in poverty but should at least “have the knowledge.” She said, “they need to understand what are the challenges and how to support these students.” She said the most crucial element in supporting an economically disadvantaged student is “know[ing] what is happening, not to judge,” so teachers can help. She felt a good relationship with parents and students and a good school culture were most crucial for student success.

Wayne

Wayne graduated with a chemistry degree. He intended to pursue a pharmacy degree, but instead, he went into business for himself. He married into education; his wife was an educator. Wayne tutored students for the ACT and SAT long before he ever thought of teaching. He decided to pursue a K-12 education career 10 years ago because the local schools kept contacting him, expressing a need for a chemistry teacher. He thought he would try it for a year or two, and he said, “I’m glad I did. I love it. I absolutely love it. I love it. I love it. I love it... It’s fun.” Wayne said becoming a teacher “just happened,” and he doesn’t see himself “ever retiring because he likes to go to work.” Wayne did not feel teachers should have experienced poverty to be able to support an economically disadvantaged student. He said, “no, I don’t think you got to come from a doom and gloom growing up to notice doom and gloom and deal better with them. No. No.” Wayne said, sometimes he deals with kids who grew up in poverty like “Hey, you gotta suck it up, but my wife, who didn’t grow up that way, says, no, you don’t

have to suck it up, and it doesn't have to be that way.” He felt smart teachers could see things. He felt the most important element to supporting these students was “letting them know [you are] on their side... a little bit more patience...and teach them self-reliance.” Wayne tells his kids, “If you want your life to be better, it has to be you. Don't rely on somebody.”

Controlling Themes in Participants' Narratives

This section discusses major controlling themes in the participants' narratives.

Brandy

Three controlling themes in Brandy's overall narrative were those of privacy, acceptance, and encouragement. Brandy felt you did not talk about poverty with friends or teachers; instead, that was a private family matter. Due to these feelings, she never asked students to talk about their individual circumstances unless they wanted to; instead, she provided them with an outlet such as a journaling opportunity or a mental break. A repeating theme in Brandy's narrative was that “It's okay.” Brandy's siblings and parents have explained to her that not everybody can have material wants, and that is okay because that was not what mattered, and that their family had enough. She felt her parents worked hard and provided for their family the best they could. This same idea carried into her classroom. She felt these children's parents may be poor, but they did not want their kids to be dumb. Brandy encouraged parent interaction, and she felt parents were doing the best they could with the resources they had. Brandy would tell her students, “it is okay” when students discussed things that may embarrass them or make them feel different. Brandy felt it was important to build a trusting relationship with parents

because they were all the kids had. Brandy was also a believer in encouragement. She felt she received it from her teachers, and she believed it was important for her students and their parents. She spoke about making a student's day the best day she could, as well as not berating parents (show them you care, lift them up, make them proud of who they are, share their culture, and make sure they know they are worth the time and that they are special).

DeShawn

Three controlling themes in DeShawn's overall narrative were those of loneliness, resistance, and awareness. DeShawn felt he was on his own. He and his mom rarely talked, and according to DeShawn, they did not have that mom/son bond. DeShawn felt he lacked emotional support in the home. He carried this experience into his interactions with students. He emphasized the importance of seeing the students, offering support, understanding where they are coming from, and letting the students know they will not be given up on. DeShawn demonstrated resistance. He resisted his emotions about his father being in prison and the disconnection he had with his mom. He resisted the stereotypes often connected with his race and his socioeconomic level. He resisted a negative environment, one that was often attached with poverty and legal issues in the home. Instead, he gravitated to positive people with resources and opportunity. He also encouraged his students to resist feeding into the image others expected of them. He would tell his students to resist the stereotypes, resist the negative atmosphere, and be better. DeShawn also had a sense of awareness. He was aware of what he wanted and began, as he named it, "resume building" from a young age. His awareness of statistics

that surround cultural barriers guided much of his activism on his campus. He participated in book studies, panel discussions, and movie reviews with students and organizations. He also guided many professional development opportunities about cultural awareness for his campus. He considered the impact he had as a black male role model on his students.

Hugo

Some of the controlling themes that guided Hugo were that of being an outsider, a worrier, and a contributor. Hugo often spoke of feeling like an outsider. He was an outsider in his neighborhood because he did not attend his neighborhood school. He felt like an outsider in his home because he spoke a language his parents could not understand. He felt like an outsider in his school due to his socioeconomic level. He did not want the students he taught to struggle with these same feelings of not belonging. He worked with communities in school to open a closet on campus for kids to “shop” from for special events like homecoming and prom and bring in outside counselors to provide that social-emotional learning to students. Hugo was also a worrier. He was worried about being deported, not helping in supporting his family financially, and not succeeding in school. He was consumed with being the main communicator between his parents from one side and teachers, doctors, and anyone else who did not speak Spanish from the other. He recognized that his students often shut down due to similar circumstances. He recalled students being overcome with worry about a parent being deported or a parent being incarcerated. He has also had students assume they would not attend college because they needed to support their parents. He often shared with them that there is not a

race to graduate from college. Instead, he encouraged them to work if they needed to while taking a course or two, but not to give up on their dream. Last, Hugo was a contributor. He recognized the contribution his teachers and the early college program he enrolled in made to his life success. His teachers never made him feel that he was a burden despite them opening their classroom early or staying late so he could use a computer or get extra help. He chose to teach at an early college like the one he attended to help other students like him. He encouraged his students, never made them feel it was a burden to help them, shared his own struggles, and tried to connect them to resources.

Jenna

Three controlling themes in Jenna's overall narrative were heaviness, introverted, and erasure. Jenna often felt she carried the weight of the world on her shoulders. She had to be responsible for her education, siblings, groceries/cooking, and even her mom. Jenna felt the school should help ease those burdens by building a community for the students in the school. Some ideas she had were homework support, counseling, and providing needed supplies on day one, so students do not have to enter the classroom worried about not having what they needed, something she often experienced. Jenna was an introvert. She often kept to herself. She moved around so much that building trusting relationships were difficult. One teacher was key to bringing her out of her shell, something she regularly thought back on when she experienced kids in her classroom with similar tendencies. Jenna mentioned that sometimes the quiet ones have big problems they are struggling with. She saw the importance of seeking them out, showing them, you care, and offering help. Jenna felt there was an erasure of any trace of strength until she

reached high school. She struggled academically in math but was pretty brilliant with writing. She felt she was identified mostly by her math disability in school. This affected her deeply, and it was not until high school that teachers began to praise her writing strengths and provided an avenue for her to spotlight her talents. As a teacher, she practiced focusing on students' strengths. Jenna supported her students' weaknesses but also fed their strengths. She did not want children to feel like their challenge was their identity like she felt in school.

Margarita

Three controlling themes in Margarita's overall narrative were being caring, reflective, and purposeful. Margarita experienced many hardships as a child. She felt the positive environment at school as well as the caring love from her grandma during that difficult time made everything so much better. As a teacher, Margarita tried to build a good relationship with her students. She incorporated caring, love, and understanding in all that she does. She was of the idea that the children's difficulties were also her difficulties. Margarita was also reflective. She experienced a traumatic event as a child that impeded her academic success. Her trauma hindered her ability to focus and led her to act out for attention. Margarita's teachers devoted time to help her academically and emotionally. She often reflected on this experience from her childhood when she planned her approach with some of her students. She realized the children she taught may not be able to focus or were acting out due to their life circumstances. She realized that their brains were most likely not alert because more weighing things were bogging them down. She also recognized that her students may be acting out because they were seeking

attention. She devoted time to these children in small groups and tried to give them positive attention. She also reached out to their parents. She felt parents could be powerful if teachers communicated with them. Margarita was also purposeful in her actions. She felt she could best help her students when she knew what they needed. She also felt they performed best if they knew her expectations. She was purposeful in making the children and their families feel valued and important. She systematically celebrated their strengths and their culture and invited a positive relationship with their families.

Wayne

Three controlling themes in Wayne's overall narrative were being angry, tough, and militant. Wayne was angry. He was angry that his parent's made bad decisions, that there was this heavy ceiling over him most of his childhood, and that life was so unfair. Wayne found that some of his students were also embarrassed by their parent's hurtful actions, acted on the defense, and felt their future is bleak. He reminded these students that their parents' and their parents' actions did not define them. He explained that they have to take what opportunity they want. He used his life story as an example that things could get better and that his education changed everything. He emphasized to the children the need to work hard on a trade or college so that they could get out. Wayne was tough. He felt he could not let things bother him. He saw hard stuff as a child and just had to be tough to get through it. He did not feel anyone was really ever there for him. He did not sugarcoat life, not even for his students. He taught in a militant way. Wayne told students not to “wallow in self-pity” and to “suck it up” when they tried to make excuses. He told

them he did not want to hear their crybaby crap. Instead, he told them they needed to acknowledge that they failed because they did not study or did not pay attention. He told them if they want to change, they had to be the one that made it happen. He saw life as tough and that it was necessary to seize your own opportunity even in the midst of all this toughness.

Summary

This chapter introduced the participants and shared their demographic data. Prefaces from each participant about poverty, education, and the relationship were shared. Challenges students and educators faced as children raised-in-poverty were discussed across 11 dimensions. Each participant expressed their story of becoming an educator. Last, controlling themes were created from each participant's unique overall narrative. Chapter five will summarize the findings and discuss the findings of this study with that of the literature reviewed.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will summarize the study, discuss the findings, share the implications (for practice, policy, research, and theory), and list the limitations.

Summary of the Study

This section will summarize the study.

Research Problem

Although educational policy at the federal and state-level demand a fair and equal opportunity for high-quality education for all students, and although improving academic achievement is a central focus on the high-stakes standards-based accountability movement, the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students in public schools continues to suffer.

Childhood poverty has been a perpetual problem in the United States, with one in five children considered to live below the poverty level and one in two considered poor or near-poor (Dreyer et al., 2016). American Indian/Alaska Native (31.1%), black (28.7%), and Hispanic (25%) children are more likely to live in poverty than white (10.9%) or Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (12.2%) children. Also, Thirty-one percent of the poor under 18 are either immigrants or American-born kids of immigrant parents (Hymowitz, 2017, p. 4).

Southern states report higher poverty rates than the rest of the country (Baldari, 2018, p. 2). Texas has a greater percentage of children living in poverty (24%) and low income (48%) than the national average (19% and 40% respectively). In Texas, Hispanic children (32%) and Black children (32%) are three times more likely to live in poverty than White (10%) or Asian (10%) children (NCCP, 2018b). In Texas, the poverty rate is higher for children born of immigrant parents (32%), living with a single parent (58%), or with a parent that does not have a high school diploma (54%) (NCCP, 2018b).

Both in Texas and in the United States, economically disadvantaged students differ from other students by the level of poverty in their school and their school location. Texas had a higher percentage of students on free and reduced lunch (58.9%) than the United States (52.1%) as a whole (TEA, 2019c). Percentages of students by race vary between high poverty and low poverty schools. Hispanic (45%) and Black (44%) students are more likely to attend high poverty schools than low poverty schools (8% Hispanic and 7% Black) (NCES 2019b). The opposite is true for Asian students (14% attend high poverty schools and 39% attend low poverty schools) and White students (8% attend high poverty schools and 31% attend low poverty schools). Economically disadvantaged students in Texas also differ by school location: 71% in major urban areas, 51% in major suburban areas, 66% in independent towns, and 15% in rural areas (TEA, 2017a). The United States mirror similar results, with the largest percentage of economically disadvantaged students being in major cities (40%) and the smallest in rural areas (15%) (NCES, 2019b).

Both in Texas and in the United States, children subjected to poverty are likely to lag substantially in both reading and math skills (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). In the United States, students subjected to poverty enter school with this readiness gap that grows as they get older and results in lower test scores and a higher risk of dropping out (Child Fund International, 2013). The percentage of American students in reading and math special education programs are substantial for students on free and reduced priced meals (20.9%) compared to general education students (10.8%) (Hebers et al., 2012). In Texas, 65% of children living in poverty are not proficient in reading and math (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018).

Throughout the history of federal and state policy history, there was an emphasis on good quality education for every child irrespective of their socioeconomic background (ESEA, PL 89-10; ESSA, PL 114-95, 2015; NCLB, PL 107-110; Texas Education Code, 1995; U. S. Const. amend. XIV). The federal government emphasizes civil rights: fair and equal opportunity for all students (U. S. Const. amend. XIV). In addition, federal, state, and local governments all play a part in reinforcing standards-based accountability in schools. The state in specific establishes standards for accountability (ESSA, PL 114-95, 2015). The local school districts directly impact student learning and school improvement by following state and federal guidelines (House Bill 22, 85th Leg., 2017). “Raising academic standards for all students and measuring student achievement to hold schools accountable for educational progress are central strategies for promoting educational excellence and equity in our Nation’s schools” (U. S. Department of Education, 2019, p. 1).

It is essential to understand and support the needs of children subjected to poverty and expand their opportunities (Tingle et al., 2018). Sociodemographic disconnects occur between teachers and students. Teachers that have some prior experience with low socioeconomic children tend to be more invested in their role as stakeholder for these students (Whipp & Geronime, 2017). When it comes to child well-being, equity should be a goal for all of us (Lee et al., 2016). When equity is the focus, educators can gain a “better understanding of students and their identities and experiences” (Gehrke, 2005).

Research Purpose

This research study aims to understand how educators who grew up in poverty understand and improve the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students.

Methodology

This phenomenological, qualitative study used a cross-sectional, descriptive, online case study rooted in narrative nonfiction design. Online interviewing with six successful Texas educators that grew up in poverty was used as the research method. This study utilized two levels of sampling. The first was nonprobability purposeful, and it is used in selecting the school districts/schools. The second was a nonprobability, maximum variation, purposeful sampling technique, and it was used in the selection of the actual teachers. The single educator was both the unit of observation and the unit of analysis. This study utilized a narrative method of analysis to generate codes, organize the codes into themes, and construct and compare the narrative findings.

Major Findings

This section will discuss the major findings of the study.

Poverty, Education, and their Relationship. The participants defined poverty as vast (e.g., includes a lot of people, crosses all lines (like gender, sex, socioeconomic levels, and can be long-term [generational] or short-term [out of work; illness]), living below the average income for family size, taking different shapes for different people, a form of deprivation, and a mindset. The adverse effects of poverty mentioned were experiencing various difficulties, living in a world of lack, feeling uncertain, feeling anxious, instability, and being trapped in the poverty cycle. The participants believed it was tough to combat poverty, and instead of combatting it, we often just put a band-aid on it. To combat poverty, the participants emphasized the role of education, hope, opportunity, and motivation.

The participants described the K-12 education system as unfair, unjust, broken, unrealistic, and heavily focused on testing. The pros of the K-12 education system mentioned were that education was free and available to everyone, that schools fostered a sense of community, and that teachers provided dedication and love to students. Some participants also considered accountability to be a pro. The cons of the K-12 education system mentioned by the participants were lack of equal resources, academic gaps, social issues (e.g., feeling like an outcast due to home life and being teased for not having or being different), and high-stakes testing. To make the K-12 education system exemplary, the participants believed that programs needed to be created to help close the academic gap, that all schools needed to be on equal footing, that standards needed to be aligned to

child development, and that diversified educational programs were needed to meet individual student needs.

The participants felt there was a relationship between poverty and K-12 education. The participants felt a bad education led to more poverty, and poverty made education more difficult for the students. The participants felt schools often do not understand their demographics, which widened, instead of narrowing, academic gaps. This relationship between poverty and K-12 education was dependent on the child's family (home life and school life were connected). To make this relationship exemplary, the participants believed that equal education was needed. The participants felt all schools needed a level playing field of resources for teachers and students. The participants also felt schools should build relationships with families and connect parents to valuable resources that could help them meet their child's basic needs.

Challenges and Coping. Socially, these children raised in poverty felt they were inferior, alienated, like outsiders, refrained from participating in school events, and socially awkward. Historically, these children suffered from generational poverty, living in a broken home, struggling with balancing home and school responsibilities, difficulty gaining residency or citizenship in the United States, and losing their culture's historical traditions. These children self-coped with these challenges through extracurricular activities (karate, football, & basketball), journaling, and building inner strength. Some also coped with the help of friends and family. Successful teachers helped these children overcome these social and historical challenges by providing an outlet for the student's frustrations, sharing their personal stories, and offering hope for the future. The K-12

education system helped these children through counseling programs, professional development for educators, and family resources. The overall community felt parents were asking for help and seeking it out. Therefore, nonprofit organizations within the community were advocating for student resources to assist families.

Some of the financial and economic challenges children subjected to poverty faced were belonging to families with low-wage jobs, disconnected utilities, minimal money for clothing or necessities, financial instability, belonging to single-parent homes (only one-income provider), and poor money management. The children coped by accepting their parents were doing the best they could, starting work at an early age, and feeling like they needed to take on the parent's role in the home. Successful educators helped by promoting school initiatives and drives to bring in community resources for their students. The education system packed weekend backpacks with food, held school supply, and shoe drives, and promoted an angel tree to help families around Christmas. The children felt the school, their families, and government resources played an essential role in coping through financial and economic hardships.

Political challenges children that grew up in poverty faced included deportation, legal issues (Child Protective Services checks, the arrest of a parent, and custody battles), and a lack of proper academic funding in schools. Students coped with these challenges through peaceful protests, self-motivation, and hope. Successful educators helped students cope by encouraging them. The K-12 education system helped by offering counseling for students, parent nights, and a home/school liaison.

Ethnic and racial challenges were centered around a lack of representation at school, a lack of cultural understanding, a feeling of inferiority, and a feeling of being an outsider. Children coped by moving on, getting tough, or observing what was deemed appropriate. Often a friend was their help in coping. Successful teachers considered racially matched mentoring, building trusting relationships with the children, and celebrating these children's diversity as helpful coping mechanisms. The K-12 education system needed to remain steadfast in having high expectations for all children and teachers while teaching social-emotional learning and celebrating the children's culture. Overall, community coping was not recognized.

Academically, these children raised in poverty felt their home environment did not promote education, and they suffered from home instability, a learning difficulty, and lacking technology. Cognitively, these children suffered from laziness, maturity gaps, an inability to focus, increased stress levels, and a home environment that did not promote education. The children coped by sustaining an internal drive to do better. The children often felt that teachers, peers, and guardians helped them to cope. Personalized instruction, making sure parents were informed, and consistent expectations were essential strategies successful educators utilized to help these children cope. The Education System provided meaningful learning and celebrated the academic success of these children. The children's guardians often did one of two things, sought out community help or avoided it entirely.

These children's school behavior challenges included being withdrawn, attention-seeking, angry, defensive, or misunderstood. These children coped through an internal

desire to do better, changing their environment, reflecting on their behavior, distracting themselves, and being tough. The children felt teachers and family helped them recover from behavioral issues. Teachers communicated well with parents, understood the student's circumstances, taught expectations, and redirected the behavior. The K-12 education system provided behavioral training for teachers and behavioral support/counseling for students. A community resource oftentimes provided this counseling.

Educational challenges these children raised in poverty dealt with were suffering academic gaps, lack of diverse teachers and administrators, a lack of resources/funding, and feeling singled out by teachers or peers. The children coped internally or through counseling. They felt teachers and counselors were most helpful in the coping process. Successful teachers were a primary support mechanism through the love, compassion, and dedication they presented to the students. The K-12 education system coped by becoming purposeful in improvement plans, providing specific/meaningful training, and ensuring local accountability. The overall community helped by bringing overall awareness to these children's educational needs.

Family challenges included being raised in a broken home, parental alcohol or drug abuse, home instability, legal issues, manipulative/selfish behaviors by a parent, pressure to help support the family, and being a latchkey kid. The children utilized distractions (reading, fishing, interacting with siblings, visiting friends, extracurriculars, or working) to cope. The children felt their siblings, other family members, and friends helped them to cope. Successful educators provided a support system at school for the

children and the children's families. The K-12 education system helped to plug the families into supportive resources (counselors, parent classes, or mentorships) within the community. The community offered support services such as a boys and girls club, counselors, and mentorships.

Neighborhood challenges the children experienced were feeling unsafe, embarrassed, trapped, or like an outsider. The children often coped with neighborhood challenges by gravitating to different environments and lying about their circumstances. Positive friendships and nearby family members often helped these children cope with their neighborhood challenges. Successful educators felt they could only provide students with needed love and encouragement while they were at school. The education system increased their presence in the community and showed students another world (through field trips, film, and art). The participants did not mention any community support offered.

Psychologically and emotionally, these children raised in poverty felt worried, embarrassed, unsettled, and inferior to peers. They often coped by focusing on the positive and using distractions. The children often coped alone or with the help of friends, teachers, and family. Their friends provided them with needed distractions. Teachers showed these children empathy and provided regular check-ins. The K-12 education system's primary role was providing an avenue for these students to vent. Parents often coped by seeking out resources through the school or community that could help their child.

Physically, these children raised in poverty did not receive routine check-ups, suffered from environmental afflictions, and did not eat a healthy diet. The children also lacked glasses and regular sleep. Parents, teachers, and schools were the most resourceful in helping the children cope. Parents brought the children to the doctor when necessary. Educators offered healthy snacks, provided a little tender loving care, and promoted sunshine and exercise. The K-12 school system provided a hot breakfast and lunch each weekday for the children and promoted physical health through gym class and extracurriculars. The school nurse worked with community partnerships (asthma buses, dentists, and eye doctors) to provide regular health screenings for these students.

Becoming an Educator. This section discusses why the participants became educators, if they felt educators should have experienced poverty to understand their students, and what was important for supporting economically disadvantaged students.

Brandy became an educator so she could support other students academically and provide social/emotional learning. DeShawn wanted to pursue an education career so he could give back to the community. Hugo started his education career in an early college high school since early college high school significantly impacted his life. Jenna wanted to be “immersed in that world” of English/literature. Jenna began her career in education because she always had a teaching spirit. Margarita began her career in education because she could obtain a VISA as a bilingual teacher. She was very sad to confess why she became an educator. Wayne pursued a degree in Chemistry because it was a subject he loved. He started an education career because a local school expressed a need for a chemistry teacher, and he was in-between careers after selling his business. None of the

participants felt an educator needed to have experienced poverty to help support economically disadvantaged students. Still, Jenna did feel it provided her with a good perspective of what students may be dealing with. Hugo disagreed and felt it could hinder the educator by assuming the student experienced a similar life to their own. The participants felt what was important for supporting economically disadvantaged students was empathy, teaching self-reliance, flexibility, offering them hope, and believing in them. Margarita also felt educators needed to know what was happening in a child's life, not to judge them but to help them.

Major Controlling Themes from the Narratives. This paragraph discusses three major controlling themes in each participant's narrative. Themes in Brandy's overall narrative were those of privacy, acceptance, and encouragement. Themes in DeShawn's overall narrative were those of loneliness, resistance, and awareness. The controlling themes that guided Hugo were being an outsider, a worrier, and a contributor. The controlling themes in Jenna's overall narrative were heaviness, withdrawal, and erasure. The themes in Margarita's overall narrative were being caring, reflective, and purposeful. Wayne's controlling themes were being angry, tough, and militant.

Ecological Connections. The findings in this study supported all six levels of the ecological systems theory model (see Figure 1). The six levels included the individual, and the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Much like the model, this study found the individual to experience social (inferiority, social awkwardness, and being an outsider), emotional (worry and embarrassment), physical (lacking glasses and irregular sleep), and cognitive (laziness and maturity gaps)

challenges. Adding to the model, the study also found the individual to experience academic (a learning difficulty, home instability, and a lack of technology), psychological (feeling unsettled and a feeling of inferiority), and behavioral (withdrawal, attention-seeking behaviors, and defensive behaviors) challenges.

Much like the model, the study found the microsystem to include home (instability and an environment that did not promote education), school (a lack of diverse faculty and a lack of resources/funding), childcare (being a latchkey kid), peer (feeling like an outsider and feeling socially awkward), and neighborhood (feeling unsafe, feeling like an outsider, and feeling trapped) challenges.

Within the mesosystem, interrelations between home, school, neighborhood, peers, and childcare were confirmed by this study. If an individual faced a challenge at home, they likely faced challenges in relation to school, neighborhood, peer relationships, and childcare. For example, these students lived in economically disadvantaged areas and went to school in economically disadvantaged areas (home, school, and neighborhood interrelation).

In the exosystem, this study found parent work (hours and low wages), community resources (counseling, clothing and supply drives, and mobile medical clinics), neighborhood dynamics (an unsafe environment and feeling like an outsider), family friends (unsafe and untrustworthy relationships), and school administrative decisions (training and expectations) all to be part of challenges these students faced.

In the macrosystem, this study found challenges with TEA, ESSA, accountability systems (high-stakes testing, special education placement, funding, and Response to

Intervention), and cultural norms (losing language and cultural traditions and a lack of cultural understanding). In addition, this study found political challenges (deportation, injustices, and legal issues) and ethnic/racial challenges (lack of representation and & feeling misunderstood).

Last, this study showed challenges in the chronosystem such as time in a stable home (consistent guardians and consistent address), time in poverty (short-term [loss of job] or long-term [generational]), time of economic crisis (COVID 19), and time in school (excessive mobility).

This study found, much like the mesosystem shows, those interrelations occurred throughout this ecological model. The individual experienced personal challenges that were related to the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. An example of such is that poverty in a neighborhood was conjoined with poverty in schools. Poverty in schools was inseparable from the challenges faced by accountability systems and by the lack of community resources. Time in poverty impeded social and emotional health, time in a stable home, and behavior. For example, “Economically disadvantaged kids live in an economically disadvantaged area.” These kids “don't really [see] a positive light, then that negatively affects them” (DeShawn). Neighborhood dynamics were also inseparable from social/emotional health and peer relationships. The participants often felt like outsiders in their neighborhoods (internal/external behaviors and internal/external expectations were different). Individual behavioral issues were inseparable from challenges in the home, at school, or in the

community. The students often felt unsettled, experienced increased stress levels, and struggled against a home environment that did not promote education.

This study supported the ecological model (see Figure 1) in that it found many interrelations through the six levels (individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) of the ecological systems theory. Poverty is a complex system that is not found at only one level of a child's individual experience. Instead, it is inseparable from all levels of their ecological experience. Poverty is a structural ecological phenomenon and it should be researched and treated as such.

Discussion of Findings

This study's findings are consistent with previous research studies that showed that economically disadvantaged students face multiple challenges both out of school (raised in a broken-home, food insecurity, lack of stability in the home) (Dreyer et al., 2016; Quint et al., 2018; Wood, 2003; Yoshikawa et al., 2012) and in school (academic, social, and behavioral issues) (Child Fund International, 2013; Garcia & Weiss, 2017; and Milner, 2013). Like the existing literature, this study found that many of these children's in-school challenges were affected by their out-of-school challenges (Milner, 2013). Similar to Quint et al. (2018), this study found that children subjected to poverty experienced material deprivation, unsafe environments, diminished social-emotional well-being, and awareness of the poverty's stigma. In alignment with the literature review, this study also found that the challenges children in poverty suffer from often lead to physical, health, psychological, emotional, and social adverse effects, which are often lifelong (Comeau & Boyle, 2018; Dreyer et al., 2016).

Challenges Economically Disadvantaged Children Face Out of School

Similar to the existing literature, this study found that economically disadvantaged children suffer from health challenges like food insecurity (Stringer, 2016), obesity (Li et al., 2018; McCurdy et al., 2012), asthma (Whitmore, 2011), and neglect (Jonson-Reid et al., 2012). Similar to Jonson-Reid et al. (2012), this study also found that children subjected to poverty experienced a lack of food, heat, adequate shelter or clothing, untreated illness, and lack of supervision. Aligned with the literature, this study also found that teen pregnancy was more likely to occur with teens that grew up in poverty, especially in the African American population (Child Trends Databank, 2018). While not reported in the literature, this study found another health challenge to be suffering from environmental afflictions (like mosquito bites, scabies, lice, or allergies to pets or carpets).

Similar to the literature, this study found many social, emotional, and behavioral challenges these children face. Similar to the literature, this study found that poverty can contribute to internalizing behaviors such as low self-esteem and anxiety (Jensen, 2009) and social withdrawal (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997), and externalizing behaviors such as disobedience, hyperactivity, and opposition (Mazza et al., 2016). However, this study also reported four new internalizing behaviors, a constant feeling of being unsettled (from mobility and an inconsistency/instability in the home), feeling embarrassed (by home conditions, lack of utilities, or parent behavior), feeling like an outsider (like they do not belong), and feeling trapped (like upward mobility was not possible).

This study, in agreement with the literature, found that students exhibited internalizing behaviors as a result of family structure issues (Moore et al., 2009), chaos in the home (Evans et al., 2005), and because of alcohol, drug, verbal abuse, arrests, and feeling unsafe (Walker et al., 2008). Similar to the literature, this study also found that stigma (Quint et al., 2018) was a cause of internalizing behaviors with children raised in poverty, and this was brought about from an awareness of differences in clothing, school supplies, home conditions, and the receiving of government benefits (Trzcinski, 2002). This stigma led students to isolate themselves from peers (Quint et al., 2018). This study, however, also reported some additional causes of internalizing behaviors such as manipulative/selfish behaviors by a parent, difficulty balancing home and school responsibilities, fear of deportation, fear of losing cultural traditions (language and customs), and pressure to quit school and get a job to support the family. Some of the externalizing behaviors from this study align with the literature review, such as cheating and lying (Comeau & Boyle, 2018), physical aggression (Mazza et al., 2016), substance abuse (Tucker et al., 2018), arrests (Duncan et al., 2017), and cruel behavior (Comeau & Boyle, 2018). However, in this study, the participants used their parents' negative behaviors, such as substance abuse and being arrested, as motivators to avoid those things in their own lives.

Similar to the existing literature, this study reported many structural and institutional challenges these children face and that included financial hardship, poor housing, family conflict, neighborhood conflict, and discrimination (Zalaquett & Chambers, 2017). This study also found health disparities reported by the literature, such

as not having a usual care source or routine check-ups each year (Schnake-Mahl & Sommers, 2017). Like the existing literature, this study found that many of these children face problems with proper childcare, leading them to become latchkey kids or arrive at an empty home after school (Mattingly et al., 2017). While not reported in the literature, this study found some other structural or institutional challenges to include issues with Citizenship and Immigration Services, Child Protective Services, child custody battles, legal issues (arrests and deportation), and financial stability issues (minimum wage jobs requiring the parent to work more than one job or the children to also work).

Challenges Economically Disadvantaged Public-School Students Face in School

Similar to the existing literature, this study found that parent education increased education-oriented practices in high poverty homes (Banerjee, 2016), as well as child achievement expectations (Boxer et al., 2011). Like the existing literature, this study also found that parental support and involvement benefitted educational outcomes (Sime & Sheridan, 2014) and cushioned the negative effects of financial restrictions (Davis-Kean, 2005). While not reported in the literature, this study found that poverty made obtaining an education more difficult for the students (inability to focus due to more concerning things at home, not having a home environment that promoted education, lack of technology, and environmental afflictions [bug bites, lice, allergies] that were nuisances that affected concentration).

This study also echoed the existing literature about how social and emotional instability contributes to poor school performance (Jensen, 2009). Aligned with the literature, this study found bullying or alienation to cause students to feel isolated and in

emotional pain (Weinger, 2000), and to feel insecurity (Child Fund International, 2013). This study mirrored the literature in the idea that students often chose other poor children as friends at school to avoid rejection (Weinger, 2000). This study, however, unlike the literature, found two new social and emotional factors that contributed to poor school performance: feeling socially awkward or as an outsider due to social expectations differing between home and school. This study also found, unlike the literature, that low-socioeconomic students are often attention-seeking, and they do not discriminate between negative or positive attention. Similarly, unlike the literature, this study found two levels of maturity gaps- overly mature due to taking on many parent responsibilities or immature due to minimal interaction or behavioral training. Similar to Drotos & Cilesiz (2016), this study reported that students subjected to financial limitations due to poverty avoided many school functions and activities such as attending prom or homecoming, purchasing a senior ring or senior pictures, or visiting colleges. Unlike the literature however, this study found that students subjected to poverty are defensive and often resort to lying about being busy or the activity being lame when asked about attending social events.

Similar to Hair et al. (2015), this study reported achievement gaps between children of low and high socioeconomic levels. Like Brooks-Gunn and Duncan (1997), this study also recognized that children subjected to poverty had higher incidences of developmental delays, learning disabilities, and emotional or behavior problems. Unlike the literature, this study also found laziness and increased stress levels to be characteristics of low-socioeconomic students, often because parents did not promote

education, or because high-stakes testing made these children feel inferior to their peers. Much like the literature, this study found an increase in In-School Suspensions (ISS) or Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) with low-socioeconomic students, especially with the African-American population (TEA, 2019g). While not reported in the literature, this study also found ethnic and racial challenges low-socioeconomic students face in school. The students often felt misunderstood due to a lack of cultural understanding and cultural representation within their school. The students often felt like outsiders in their own school because the teachers and administrators did not understand their demographics (based on ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic level).

This study, like the existing literature, found that children subjected to poverty experienced reading and math difficulties (Garcia & Weiss, 2017) and were often placed in special education programs (Hebers et al., 2012), which sometimes diminished the student's self-confidence (Balring & Weatherhead, 2016). Unique to the literature, this study found that these services, tutoring, or small group made the students feel singled out due to the attention brought to them and their disability. Much like the literature, this study also found that economically disadvantaged students were likely to be considered twice-exceptional students (TEA, 2019c), meaning they have a learning disability and are identified as gifted and talented. Unlike the literature, this study found that students are often diagnosed with gifts and talents much later in their education due to their struggles early on in other subjects. Like the existing literature, this study found that physical environment, nutrition levels, stability in the home, and the level of exposure to learning materials/books (Najman et al., 2009) can affect educational attainment (Wood, 2003).

Much like the literature stated, this study found that high-poverty schools tended to provide lower quality education (Sass et al., 2012) and less effective teaching (Isenberg et al., 2013) than magnet or early college schools. Unlike the literature, this study found that high poverty schools lacked the resources and funding necessary for the schools to be on the same equal ground as lower-poverty schools, putting the students at a disadvantage from day one.

Coping Mechanisms out of School

Similar to the literature, this study found that students' coping with out-of-school issues involved sacrifice and courage (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016) and that students were likely to rebound from setbacks and resist temptations (Baska, 2018), and focus on the positive (Curtin et al., 2016). This study, however, also reported students to cope with out of school challenges through journaling, building inner strength, accepting their parents were doing the best they could, going to work at an early age, taking on parental responsibilities, getting tough, observing appropriate behaviors through television and personal experiences, peaceful protests, hope, self-motivation, distracting themselves (extracurriculars, going outside, and time with friends), and gravitating to different environments.

Adding to the literature, this study found that parents helped students cope outside of school with social, historical, behavioral, and psychological or emotional challenges through community resources such as counseling or mentoring programs. It also found that parents helped students cope with financial problems by seeking out government

assistance (SNAP or CHIP), community assistance (food drives), and providing emotional support.

Aligned with the literature, this study reported that community support was an essential coping mechanism for students and their families (Garcia & Weiss, 2017) and that community-school partnerships were beneficial for social (counseling & mentorships), health-related (mobile medical teams), and educational services (tutoring & clothing and supply drives) (Weiss & Reville, 2019). Adding to the literature, this study found the school nurse to be a key component in advocating for these community resources. Much like in the literature, Communities in Schools was recognized as a great community asset to low-socioeconomic students, helping students with counseling, weekend food, and parent support (TEA, 2019a). While not reported in the literature, this study also found the community helped with after-school services (Boys and Girls Club), and by bringing awareness to the schools' educational needs and advocating for student resources (fundraisers, food, supply, clothing drives).

Much like in the literature, this study also found federal, state, and local legislators key in providing coping mechanisms to support families of children raised in poverty and the education system. Also like in the literature, this study found that students have unequal access to education (Jennings, 2018), and therefore national, state, and local policymakers need to work on providing adequate resources and funding to every school to close achievement gaps (National Education Association, 2019b). Unlike the literature though, this study also found a need for legislators to provide equal access to diversified educational programs (trades, apprenticeships, and college credit in high

school), to align standards to child development, and to rethink/reanalyze high-stakes testing and the extra stress it applies to teachers and students.

Coping Mechanisms in School

Similar to the literature, this study found that students are stakeholders in their education (Nthontho, 2017), and that students can persevere (Baska, 2018) and have an internal determination and remain focused on their goals (Curtin et al., 2016). Also aligned with the literature, this study found that these students were resilient and help seekers (Curtin et al., 2016), and that they exhibited courage (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016). Adding to the literature, this study found students to cope with school challenges through extracurricular activities, getting tough, sustaining an internal drive to do better, changing their social environment, reflecting on their behavior, and focusing on the positive.

Like in the literature, this study found that parents help students cope with in-school challenges through collaboration and dialog with teachers and administrators and creating a home environment that supports learning (National Education Association, 2019b). Adding to the literature though, this study also found parents to help students cope with educational challenges by seeking tutoring, attending parent nights, and gathering school clothes and gathering school necessities from community school supply and clothing drives.

This study and the literature align with the idea that educators are an important stakeholder in helping children cope with school challenges (Turner & Juntune, 2018). Much like the in literature, this study found that educators helped students cope by offering hope (Davis, 2005), encouragement (Smith, 2014), racially matched mentoring

(Egalite et al., 2015), building trusting relationships (Murry & Malmgren, 2005), bridging home and school (Houston, 2010), having high expectations for every student (Houston, 2010; Smith, 2014), showing empathy (Davis, 2005; Williams et al., 2017), and being emotionally and academically supportive (Dietrichson et al., 2017; Hebert, 2018). Also aligned with the literature, this study found that caring for students (Williams et al., 2017), getting to know them (Gehrke, 2005), promoting a feeling of belonging (Decuir-Gunby et al., 2010), and motivating them (Hebert, 2018) were key to students coping with in-school challenges. Also aligned with the literature, this study found that successful educators who grew up economically disadvantaged can help students cope with in-school challenges by sharing their personal stories (Davis, 2005) and benefiting from their own experience with poverty when addressing the challenges these children face (Smith, 2014).

However, this study also reported that teachers helped students cope by celebrating diversity in their classroom, personalizing instruction, having consistency in expectations and routines, being purposeful in instruction, providing a positive outlet for frustrations, teaching expectations, being on the student's side, showing love, compassion, and dedication, providing regular check-ins, believing in their students, and teaching self-reliance.

Similar to the existing literature, this study found that the education system helped students cope with in-school challenges by developing quality professional development for educators that focused on closing achievement gaps and that provided training around poverty (Rasmussen, 2015), providing parent nights (Smith, 2014), providing clothing

and supplies for students in need (Smith, 2014), providing time before and after school for access to necessary resources/tutoring and maintaining high expectations for faculty (Rasmussen, 2015), maintaining a high academic rigor for students (Gehrke, 2005; Smith, 2014), providing nutritional meals (Milner, 2013), promoting a positive school climate (Hopson & Lee, 2011), and creating culturally responsive programs (McKinney, 2014). adding to the literature, this study reported more coping mechanisms within the education system, such as building relationships with families, plugging parents into valuable resources, counseling programs, promoting exercise/sunshine, providing a home/school liaison, teaching social-emotional learning, making learning meaningful, celebrating academic successes, behavioral training for teachers and students, ensuring local accountability, purposefulness in improvement plans, increasing school presence in the community, and showing students another world through field trips, film, and art.

Becoming an Educator

Much like in the literature, this study found that children who were raised in poverty became educators because they felt they had a teaching spirit (Davis, 2005; Smith, 2014), loved children (Houston, 2010), loved a specific subject area (Smith, 2014), wanted to impact others (Houston, 2010), and it was an opportunity to obtain a VISA (Houston, 2010). This study also found one additional reason for becoming an educator: to give back to the community.

Much like in the literature, this study did find that having experienced poverty provided a better perspective of what students may be dealing with (Davis, 2005; Rasmussen, 2015; Smith, 2014). The literature also reported that educators needed to

have experienced poverty to empathize with their students living in poverty (Smith, 2014). On the contrary, this study found that educators who grew up in poverty did not have to experience poverty in order to empathize with economically disadvantaged students. Instead, this study found that experiencing poverty may hinder the educator by the educator assuming the student shared a similar experience.

Much like in the literature, this study found that some important factors for supporting economically disadvantaged students for teachers were having empathy (Davis, 2005; Smith, 2014) and providing hope (Davis, 2005). Unlike the literature, this study also reported that teaching self-reliance, being flexible, believing in your students, and knowing what is going on in their lives were also important.

Overall Narratives

Adding to the literature, this study found controlling themes that traversed the educators' narratives. Each educator in this study was unique in how they experienced poverty and how they carried that experience into their practice. It was interesting to find that all six participants grew up in poverty but understood poverty in very different ways.

The controlling themes pulled from the narratives of each educator were unique and depended on their life experiences. The educators' unique experiences shaped them and the way they interacted with others. Themes in Brandy's overall narrative were those of privacy, acceptance, and encouragement. Themes in DeShawn's overall narrative were those of loneliness, resistance, and awareness. The controlling themes that guided Hugo were being an outsider, a worrier, and a contributor. The controlling themes in Jenna's overall narrative were heaviness, withdrawal, and erasure. The themes in Margarita's

overall narrative were being caring, reflective, and purposeful. Wayne's controlling themes were being angry, tough, and militant. Though each participant's themes were different, each participant felt their actions were most helpful for their students who were experiencing poverty. It was almost as if each participant was in the same group (raised in poverty) but took on a different identity or role (e.g., compassionate, tough, resistant...) within the poverty group, mostly based on what they felt helped them or hurt them the most.

This study followed a structural/ecological theoretical framework which assumes that an individual is influenced by systems of interaction and the constant evolving interaction between the person and their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This theory considers the effects of the social environment on human behavior and other underlying agents that influence and shape an individual's growth, such as the micro and macro systems (Banerjee, 2019). These six educators are successful educators who most likely tackled how they approached the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic issues surrounding poverty so differently because of the unique circumstances that shaped their own lives. Each participant often spoke of the differences they noted in the children subjected to poverty they teach compared to their own experiences. They even mentioned that their experience provided them a productive perspective, but some of their students' experiences were much worse than their own. Instead of tackling these issues with a one-size-fits-all approach, these successful educators each tackle the unique student's needs differently.

The key to this finding is that there is a huge focus on how to reach low-socioeconomic students in poverty through standardized policy and practice. Yet, standardized scores are still proving to be less than acceptable for these low socioeconomic status students. This study showed that each child is unique, and because of this uniqueness, it cannot be expected that the same outcome will occur for each student, nor can the approach be the same for each student. Schools cannot assume every child subjected to poverty is the same. Instead, unique solutions to tackling poverty's effects on a child's education need to be considered. These six educators were all children of poverty, yet their stories are diverse. Their approach to issues is often guided by their experiences. Even with their unique ways of enacting on educating these children subjected to poverty, these educators were all considered successful by their administrators. The insider knowledge of these educators could prove beneficial in tackling the many concerns the education system faces while working to improve the academic success of low socioeconomic students. Hopefully, these experiences can generate more interest and understanding in the overall academic success of these students.

Implications for Practice

Childhood poverty in the United States continues to be a major problem. Although educational policy demands a high-quality education for every student, students of poverty continue to suffer. Some recommendations for practice for addressing these needs are discussed below.

Schools

Many of these children's in-school challenges are affected by their out-of-school challenges (Milner, 2013). An important starting point for schools is to build that home/school connection. Keep in contact with families, provide regular check-ins, and connect families to valuable community resources (counselors, mentorships, & food/supply collection banks). Parent nights can be beneficial. The participants brought to light that many of the parents struggle to help their children with school work. The school could provide parent homework support classes.

Technology was another challenge often noted by the educators. Schools could consider applying for a grant or hosting a fundraiser to purchase laptops, thumb drives, and hotspots that students could check out and use at home to complete assignments. Technology should not be a barrier.

An additional concern was the demographic disconnect that possibly led to reduced test scores, higher instances in detention, and higher dropout rates. Schools should consider meaningful and purposeful training that can be used to meet the individual needs of their students. A support system that provided guidance and direction after an incident would also be beneficial to help prevent future incidences.

Teachers

A major issue low socioeconomic students face is social belonging. Educators should consider ways to create a more accepting environment where every student feels valued. One participant mentioned that while teaching a family unit, she mentioned that some children live with their grandparents and that students who were once ashamed of

this felt special when they heard other students say, “What, I wish my grandpa lived with me.” Students need to know that we are all different, and as Brandy said, “It's okay.”

To meet the individual needs of each student, the educator must know their student. To improve academic/behavioral performance, educators need to know what the child is struggling to overcome. Educators should build a positive relationship with their students, create a positive learning experience, and avoid bringing attention to these children's life challenges.

Educators should be flexible and demonstrate empathy. It is important to keep in mind the resources these students may not have outside of school. It would be beneficial to provide time and space at school to utilize any necessary resources these students may not have access to outside of school.

One participant mentioned that an educator specifically made tutorials after school appear like a special invitation for some one-on-one support. This is important to consider since some students may not seek help on their own. In addition, provide regular check-ins with your high-risk students. Let them know you care and you are there to support them.

Last, do not be afraid to be “tough.”-Hold these students accountable, be consistent, raise expectations as they meet expectations, and remind them that education can lead to change.

Parents

An important implication for practice for parents is to have a home/school connection. Work to build a relationship with the teachers and administrators (email,

phone calls, classroom visits). Seek help or guidance if you need it. Also, promote an atmosphere at home that promotes learning (a quiet space and encouragement).

Community

The main implication for community partnerships is to stay connected with the stakeholders in the school. Seek out ways to improve any resources being gathered or supplied to families, educators, or schools. Jenna mentioned that community groups sometimes gather school supplies for the kids on the first day, but parents who work odd hours have to pick them up (from a local church, department store, or community center), which proves difficult. A better idea might be to have prepacked supplies ready for the students to grab at the school on the first day. Students can then enter the classroom prepared on day one.

Implications for Policy

All six participants discussed a needed change in the federal and state accountability system. In Texas, 65% of children living in poverty are not proficient in reading and math (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018). This study's participants did not understand how the same standardized test can be given when equal access to education is not provided. This study found that students do not have equal access to education, and schools do not have equal access to resources and funding. Educators in this study also believed that standards should be aligned to child development. Many participants felt anxiety and stress are placed on students very early on to prepare these students for the rigor of standardized tests.

In addition, diversified educational programs were not available for all students and districts. Many rural schools do not have the same exposure as larger schools to early college credits, apprenticeships, and trades since they are located long distances from community colleges.

Another policy issue is that there is a larger placement of low-socioeconomic students into special education programs. It is essential to understand and support the needs of children subjected to poverty. Intervention is essential to redirect the demographic disconnects not only in academic achievement but also in behavior management. Students subjected to poverty are greatly misunderstood in the current education system. For example, 69% of economically disadvantaged students drop out of school and a large percentage of these students are enrolled in disciplinary alternative education programs (TEA, 2019g). Also, a higher percentage of lower socioeconomic students (20.9%) compared to general education students (10.8%) are enrolled in reading and math special education programs (Hebers et al., 2012).

Two participants in this study mentioned that they took the city bus, not a school bus, to school each day to attend a school with a diverse population and a higher academic rigor. This is not an option for all students and should not be a necessary option. All public schools should provide a quality, rigorous, and equitable programs.

Implications for Future Research

The number of children growing up in poverty in the United States and Texas warrants continued research on the challenges these students face, how they cope, and who helped them cope. This study could be easily duplicated utilizing another sample or

another state to see if similar results are rendered. It would be interesting to see what controlling themes another study that duplicates this study would produce. Future Educators working on their Bachelor of Science in Education that grew up in poverty could be of interest to study as well. It would also be interesting to consider interviewing other stakeholders: (1) The parents of low socioeconomic students or (2) DAEP educators. Another study could pursue how to improve the standardized scores of low socioeconomic students from the perspectives of stakeholders at the Texas Education Agency.

Implications for Theory

The structural/ecological theory of poverty utilized in this study was suitable for explaining and understanding the experiences of economically disadvantaged students' stakeholders, their challenges, and coping mechanisms they use. The structural/ecology theory, social identity, and standpoint theory also proved suitable for explaining the controlling themes found from the individual narratives produced. Researchers could explore these theories more in the context of the controlling themes rendered from the study.

Other theories came to light that future researchers could further explore. The first is the theory of internalizing behaviors. Many new internalizing behaviors were brought to light in this study, such as a feeling of being unsettled from mobility and an inconsistency/instability in the home. Another interest to explore would be the insider/outsider positioning within Critical Race Theory (Daniel, 2007). An

insider/outsider feeling was brought to light in this study by Hispanic and African-American participants.

Limitations

This qualitative narrative nonfiction research study attempted to capture the external and internal struggles students subjected to poverty face and the coping mechanisms utilized to tackle in-school and out-of-school experiences by interviewing raised in poverty educators who could draw on their life experiences as well as their educator experiences. Future researchers should consider the following limitations:

1. When determining how to divide up the interviews, consider the number of questions and the potential length of the interview. Researchers should assume the interview will take longer than anticipated. Researchers should not include a large number of questions during one interview session. Some participants in this study grew weary towards the end of the first interview because of the many questions they were asked.
2. Researchers should consider and plan for enough time to transcribe the interviews between corresponding interviews. It is also important to allow plenty of time for member-checking. This study planned limited time to do both.
3. Researchers should also consider the time constraints during holidays. This study occurred in the middle of two major holidays, which delayed some of the interviews or follow-ups from member checking due to family time or travel.

4. Researchers should consider how their personality and background could influence the analysis of the data. The researcher of this study was an educator raised in poverty. By disclosing a snapshot of my background and creating a rapport before the interviews began, I built a trusting and positive relationship with my participants during the interviews. My personal story in poverty was introduced very briefly until after the final interview, not to sway any ideals. Then, I answered any questions they had about my unique experience as an educator raised-in-poverty.

Retrospective

In retrospect, I would like to discuss some technical, reflective, and experiential changes I encountered through this dissertation. I believe we grow and learn from our experiences, and I have grown as a researcher and person through this experience.

Technically, I overlooked the necessity of flexibility when conducting a qualitative interview. I had many questions I felt essential to be answered but underestimated the time it would take to develop the needed answers. I assumed 90 minutes time window for each of the first two interviews, while they took 2-3 hours. Also, on the technical end, it was beneficial that my study took place during a major school break (Christmas). The holiday made scheduling the interviews a little easier. A 2-3-hour interview after a day of work may have proved to be too much, and planning only on weekends would have lengthened the time to completion.

As a reflective researcher, I learned the importance of listening and being open-minded. I also learned that with a sensitive topic such as poverty, quality over time

matters. Early on, and in my first interview, I watched my clock, trying to adhere to the structure of a 90-minute interview. I quickly learned the time allotted was not nearly enough, and I then explained to the participants that they would have all the time needed to complete the interview. I believe my participants felt free to elaborate and give examples due to me not constraining them to a strict time limit.

I initially went into this study a little worried about the synchronous interviews in the zoom platform. COVID-19 and distance prevented the use of face-to-face interviews. I was afraid this would impede my ability to connect and become comfortable with the participants. I believe meeting in Zoom may have made the introductions less tense. The participants were able to be in their own homes, and the flexibility Zoom allowed seemed beneficial for scheduling. The Zoom process, to my surprise, did not impede researcher/participant rapport at all.

I also learned the importance of being transparent. The participants asked early on why I wanted to conduct a study of this nature, and I briefly shared that I was a child of poverty and that I had ten years of experience as an educator in a title one school. I explained that my passion was helping all children succeed. Statistically, I shared that these children were struggling academically, socially, and behaviorally. Therefore, I wanted to interview educators who also grew up in poverty and worked with children raised in poverty to see how their voices could help socioeconomically disadvantaged children. I believe my participants wanted their voices heard, and I felt privileged to deliver their words. Though I saved most of my transparency for Interview III, I think this was an important dimension. I answered any questions the participants had about my

personal experience growing up in poverty or about me as an educator of children raised in poverty.

With such a sensitive topic about poverty, I believe a researcher need to be prepared for the participants' emotions and the feelings they would experience. Though I knew my topic surrounded a vulnerable population and was sensitive in nature, I was not prepared for the feelings I encountered. I do believe these emotions were essential to the process and made me grow as a person and researcher. Although I went into this experience knowing the feelings I experienced as a child raised in poverty and as an educator of children of poverty, I did not prepare myself enough for revisiting old feelings or the new emotions I would share. One of the participants lost a sibling in her later teen years. I had a very similar experience. Hearing her story and feeling her strength through this difficult time in her life made me revisit some of my own emotions that I did not expect to revisit during this process. I believe the strength in each participant's story had power, and I felt privileged to share their stories and to be part of their journey.

Through this experience, I now understand poverty a little deeper. I saw the importance of learning about the stories of others from the beginning. After all, that is what drove me to this study. I now see the even greater significance in stakeholders reading these stories. I learned that poverty is diverse. Those that experience it do so differently and react to it uniquely. I believe educators, administrators, parents, and even students can grow from hearing about others' experiences. At least I did. My experience had similarities and differences to many of my participants, and hearing each unique

story opened my eyes to a whole new dimension of poverty. This entire experience made me grow as a researcher, educator, and person. As Dewey (1938) emphasized, studying life and education was to study experience, and this experience was both personal and social.

Summary

The goal of Federal and State policy is to promote educational excellence for every child regardless of socioeconomic background. Yet, the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students in public schools continued to suffer. This research study aimed to understand how educators who grew up in poverty understood and improved economically disadvantaged students' educational experience. This research study aimed to understand how educators who grew up in poverty understood and improved the educational experience of economically disadvantaged students. This phenomenological, qualitative study used a cross-sectional, descriptive, online case study rooted in narrative nonfiction design. Online interviewing with six successful Texas educators that grew up in poverty was used as the research method. This study utilized two levels of sampling. The single educator was both the unit of observation and the unit of analysis. This study utilized a narrative method of analysis to generate codes, organize the codes into themes, and construct and compare the narrative findings.

One of the major findings from the study was that there was a relationship between poverty and education. This relationship created many challenges for children raised-in-poverty in and out of school. Some of the major challenges included a feeling of inferiority within their social circles and an outsider's feeling within their family and their

school. It was found that many of these children suffered from health, behavioral, and emotional challenges that affected their ability to focus in school. Their home challenges led to many of their educational challenges. Political, ethnic, family and racial challenges caused psychological challenges that the children face even today. Major coping mechanisms included being tough, having an internal drive for something better, and relying on stakeholders such as educators, friends, and family.

Major similarities to the literature with out-of-school challenges included lacking proper nutrition, health issues, and home instability. Major differences from the literature included having a constant feeling of being unsettled, feeling like an outsider, feeling trapped, fear of deportation, and fear of losing cultural traditions (language and customs). Major similarities to the literature with in-school challenges included battling learning disabilities, social awkwardness, and anxiety. Major differences to the literature regarding in-school challenges included laziness, being misunderstood, and a lack of technology. Major similarities in coping mechanisms included talking with a trusted friend, having internal strength, and focusing on the positive. Major differences in coping mechanisms included journaling, accepting their parents were doing the best they could, getting tough, distracting themselves, and gravitating to different environments. It was also found that parents, educators, administrators, and the community were valuable stakeholders that assisted in attenuating these children's challenges and helping them create needed coping mechanisms.

Like the literature, the six participants became educators to support students academically, utilize their teaching spirit, or loved a specific subject. Unique to the

literature, some of the participants pursued education to give back to the community. Adding to the literature, this study found controlling themes that traversed the educators' narratives. Each educator in this study was unique in how they experienced poverty and how they carried that experience into their practice. It was interesting to find that all six participants grew up in poverty but understood poverty in very different ways.

Implications for practice, policy, future research, and theory were also discussed. Implications for practice included ideas for improving social acceptance, being flexible, demonstrating empathy, promoting a positive home/school relationship, diversifying education, and holding high-expectations. Policy implications included a further study of special education placement, matching child development to standards, and equal access. The number of children growing up in poverty in the United States warrants continued research on the challenges these students face, how they cope, and who helps them cope.

Limitations involved the length of the interviews. Some participants in this study grew weary towards the end of the first interview because of the many questions. Hopefully, these experiences can generate more interest and understanding in the overall academic success of these students.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter

Dear [Principal of School],

My name is Rebecca Morris, a doctorate student in the Educational Leadership Program in the James I. Perkins College of Education, Stephen F. Austin State University. As part of my research work, I am currently conducting a study titled *K-12 Economically Disadvantages Students, Poverty, and Education: Ecological Narratives of Successful, Raised-In-Poverty, Texas Educators* which purpose is to understand how successful Texas educators who grew up in poverty understand and improve the educational experience of Texas economically disadvantaged K-12 students. This study will be beneficial to the educational community since it will contribute to a better understanding of how poverty is experienced by K-12 students in Texas and how such experience affects the quality of K-12 educational experience and academic achievement for these students, and to a better understanding of how to solve this problem.

I am all hopes that you will be able to grant me access to two teachers who you think strongly meet all the criteria specified below, but if you do not have two eligible teachers, one will suffice. Although it helps my purposes for these teachers to be diverse by gender and race/ethnicity, the critical criteria for selection are the following:

1. The school at which you and the teacher work is in Texas.
2. The school at which you and the teacher work is public.
3. The school at which you and the teacher work is high poverty (title one).
4. The teacher has experienced poverty growing up as a K-12 student in Texas.
5. The teacher is highly successful in teaching students who live in poverty.
6. The teacher has at least five successful years of experience teaching high poverty students.

Please be assured that my research study will adhere to the highest standards of educational research ethics, including but not limited to securing an SFASU Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, protecting confidentiality and anonymity of all participants at all times, and making sure the research does not cause any risk, harm, or discomfort to any of the participants. Participation in this study will be totally voluntary and will not involve any kind of compensation.

Should you be willing to grant me access to the sample described above, and I am all hopes you will be able to do so, please complete the letter attached to this email (on

letterhead) then email it back to me as a PDF scan. The next steps will include an email with a Qualtrics survey link that you may then forward to the educators you recommended for the study. The teachers selected will participate in three semi-structured Zoom interviews during the Academic Year 2020-2021.

Should you have any questions, meanwhile, please feel more than free to email me at this email, morrisrn1@jacks.sfasu.edu, or call me at (903) 692-7500. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this study, you may also contact Dr. Ali Hachem, project coordinator and professor of graduate studies in the Human Services and Educational Leadership Department at Stephen F. Austin State University. Dr. Hachem may be contacted by phone at (469) 543-9644 or by email at hachema@sfasu.edu. Should you have any concerns about this research at any stage after it starts, you may contact Dr. Hachem or/and Stephen F. Austin State University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at (936) 468-6606.

Thank you so much for your time reading this email and for your potential consideration.
Yours in Education, Rebecca Morris

APPENDIX B

Demographics Survey

1. Please type your name in the box below.
2. Please select your gender below
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. African American
 - b. Hispanic
 - c. White
4. What subject do you teach?
5. What grade do you teach?
6. Please list any degrees/certificates you have achieved.
7. What school are you currently working for?
8. Please share your preferred email address?

APPENDIX C

Letter of Consent

Dear participant,

My name is Rebecca Morris, an Educational Leadership doctorate student at Stephen F. Austin State University. I am currently conducting a research study titled *K-12 Economically Disadvantaged Students, Poverty, and Education: Ecological Narratives of Successful, Raised-in-Poverty, Texas Educators*. The purpose of this study is to understand how successful Texas educators who grew up in poverty understand and improve the educational experience of Texas economically disadvantaged K-12 students. This study will be beneficial to schools and their wider culture because it will contribute to a better understanding of how poverty is experienced by K-12 students in Texas and how such experience affects these students' quality of educational experience and academic achievement. This research will also contribute to a better understanding of how k-12 student poverty should be negotiated in educational setting in a way that alleviates the problems of poor-quality educational experience and low academic achievement.

I hope you will accept my cordial invitation for you to participate in this study. Should you accept my invitation, you will participate in three 90-minute Zoom Meeting Video Chat interviews, separated by a week period. The interviews will be audio-recorded. The digital recording will be stopped at any time you think needed. Transcripts of your interviews will be shared with you so that you can review them for accuracy.

This IRB approved and non-compensated research study is designed to fully protect your anonymity and confidentiality during all phases of the research, after its completion, and during its public dissemination. All collected data, information, files, and communications will be secured at all times and permanently destroyed five years after its collection. Should you accept that the interviews be audio-recorded, the recordings will be made using SFASU Zoom. The audio-recordings will not be archived for any future research. The audio-recordings will be destroyed five years after transcription.

Taking part in this study is totally voluntary. You can withdraw from this study at any stage, and without any consequences. You will also have the choice not to answer any interview question or group of questions, and without the need for any justification. Your participation does not mean that you are giving up any legal rights.

There are minimal anticipated participation risks of this research beyond those encountered in everyday life (e.g. low level of psychological/emotional discomfort). Should you be exposed to such risk, the interview can be terminated at any time and at your request.

Should you have any questions about this research or be interested in a copy or summary of this study's results, you may communicate with Dr. Ali Hachem, project coordinator (hachema@sfasu.edu). Should you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, please feel free to contact Stephen F. Austin State University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (936-468-6606).

Respectfully yours
Rebecca Morris

APPENDIX D

Interview I

Introductory Questions

1. Could you please talk a little about yourself?
2. How would you describe poverty in the United States?
3. What do you think are this poverty's adverse effects?
4. How do you think we as a culture should combat poverty?
5. How would you describe K-12 education in the United States?
6. What do you think are pros and cons of such an education?
7. How do you think we can make this education exemplary?
8. How do you describe the relationship between poverty and k-12 education in the United States?
9. How do you think we can make this relationship exemplary?

Research Question 1: How do successful educators who grew up in poverty understand the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?

Research question 2: How do successful educators who grew up in poverty improve the cultural, social, and educational experiences of their schools' economically disadvantaged students?

10. Could you please describe an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?

11. Could you please describe the out-of-school challenges economically disadvantaged K-12 students face?

12. Could you please describe the in-school challenges economically disadvantaged K-12 students face?

XXXXX: by the order below (12 metrics with $12 \times 4 = 48$ questions) (see Table 1)

a. Could you please describe the XXXXX challenges you think economically disadvantaged K-12 students face?

b. How do you help these students overcome these XXXXX challenges?

c. What do you think the k-12 education system should do to better support these students overcome these XXXXX challenges?

d. What coping mechanisms have you witnessed students, their families, and their communities using to overcome these XXXXX challenges?

Table 1

The Eleven Dimensions

1	Social & Historical	4	Ethnic & Racial	7	Educational: Teachers, Peers, Administrators, & Wider School Culture	10	Psychological/Emotional
2	Financial & Economical	5	Academic & Cognitive	8	Family: Parents, Siblings, Wider Family	11	Physical Health
3	Political (Policy & Legal)	6	School Behavioral	9	Friends/Neighborhood/Community		

Note. Each dimension replaced the XXXXX in the interview questions.

APPENDIX E

Interview II

Research question 3: What were the childhood experiences of successful educators who grew up in poverty? What cultural and social obstacles did they face? How were such obstacles overcome?

Research question 4: What were the K-12 educational experiences of successful educators that grew up in poverty? What obstacles did they face in school? How were such obstacles negotiated?

4. Could you please describe yourself as an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?
5. Could you please describe the out-of-school challenges you have faced as an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?
6. Could you please describe the in-school challenges you have faced as an economically disadvantaged K-12 student?

XXXXX: by the order below (12 metrics with 12x4=48 questions) (see Table 2).

- d. Could you please describe the XXXXX challenges you have faced as economically disadvantaged K-12 student?
- e. How did you cope with these XXXXX challenges?
- f. Who else helped you cope with these XXXXX challenges? How?

Table 2*The Eleven Dimensions*

1	Social & Historical	4	Ethnic & Racial	7	Educational: Teachers, Peers, Administrators, & Wider School Culture	10	Psychological/Emotional
2	Financial & Economical	5	Academic & Cognitive	8	Family: Parents, Siblings, Wider Family	11	Physical Health
3	Political (Policy & Legal)	6	School Behavioral	9	Friends/Neighborhood/Community		

Note. Each dimension replaced the XXXXX in the interview questions.

Research question 5: Why do successful educators who grew up in poverty decide to pursue an education degree and career?

4. Why did you decide to pursue an education-related degree?
5. Why did you decide to pursue a K-12 education career?
6. Do you think an educator should have experienced poverty in order to be able to best support an economically disadvantaged K-12 student? Could you please elaborate?

VITA

Rebecca N. Morris graduated from Carthage High School in 1993. After high school, she obtained her Associate of Science from Panola College. She then received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education from East Texas Baptist University in 1997. She continued her education at The University of Texas at Tyler where she graduated with a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction in 2017. In the summer of 2017, she was accepted into the doctoral program at Stephen F. Austin State University, where she earned a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership in 2021. She has 20+ years of experience in K-12 education as a teacher, mentor, and principal. She currently teaches in the Education Department at Panola College. She also serves as an adjunct in the Education Department for The University of Texas at Tyler.

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Style manual designation: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition*

Typist: Rebecca Morris, B.S., M.Ed.