

12-2017

EXPLORING ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RESILIENCE AND PERSISTENCE AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF COLOR

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EXPLORING ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE RESILIENCE
AND PERSISTENCE AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF COLOR

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Stephen Louis Franklin

December 2017

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine how schools influenced and promoted student resilience through the lens of persistence, leading to high school completion. The focus of this study was significant because there are few studies that focus on student resiliency as it relates to high school completion through the lens of persistence. Previous studies have generally identified at-risk factors for non-high school completion and either qualify or quantify the results. They have not taken into account the social and economic contexts of school and the communities and their influence on student resiliency. This study utilized a phenomenological methodology that identified the lived experiences of twenty-six 11th - grade students of color at an urban high school in Southern California that manifested resilience and persistence. Semi-structured interviews of participants drawn from a stratified variation sampling were utilized. A CRT framework was applied to examine the role of high school as a protective factor, the interactions of faculty and staff, and the perceptions of participants as it relates to school culture and climate. External factors such as supportive relationships in the familial and community context were also examined and discussed.

The results of this study highlighted school climate that promotes belonging along with a collective focus on the study of student success, the role of teacher-student and counselor relationships as being pivotal to the development of resilience in students of color. The findings from this study provide examples for schools to develop supportive climates that focus on promoting and developing academic, social, and emotional resiliency in students of color with specific next step recommendations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One cannot possibly take on an endeavor of this magnitude by oneself. There are many people that I would like to acknowledge for their support along the way.

First, I want to thank my sisters Janet and Michelle, through this journey I was not always available, and missed out on a few family events and trips.

Second, I would like to thank my cohort at California State University, San Bernardino. My cohort, cohort 8, or as well liked to refer to ourselves, “The Ocho”, bonded in a way I could not imagine and became a second family. Throughout our coursework, and individual efforts to complete our dissertations, “The Ocho” remained strong and always supportive of each other, never competitive.

Third, I would like to thank my family, friends, and co-workers who were supportive during this journey, and kept reminding me this would soon be over, and that it would all be worth it. Their patience, encouragement, and absolute support provided me with the motivation to continue and achieve my goals.

Finally, I must express my sincere appreciation to my Dissertation Committee: Dr. Donna Schnorr who served as my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Doris Wilson, and Dr. Sherri Franklin-Guy for providing guidance with their feedback and expertise.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to three amazing women, whom without their support and guidance, this day would not be possible.

First, my mother. My mother always voiced her expectations that all three of her children would have a college education, and pursue happiness. It was my mother who encouraged me to enter the field of education, when at the age of 32, I experienced a “mid-life” crisis. Thank you mom, for pushing into the field that I should have been in all along.

Second, my godmother Sissy. Sissy passed away in March of 2017, so she is not here to see me reach this point. Though not here physically, Sissy walks with me every day. When I was considering pursuing my doctorate, it was Sissy, who gave me the final push and encouragement.

Finally, my grandmother. Her given name was Edna, but we all called her “Mom”. Mom was the quiet force that ensured that education was taken seriously, and that respect for self, ranked with respect for others.

It was this triumvirate of Mommy, Sissy, and Mom that ensured, that as a young black male growing up without a father figure that I did not succumb to the streets. Of these three, only my mother is still with me. Sissy and Mom, however, I am sure are looking down and beaming with pride.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

American adolescents are exposed to significant levels of dysfunction and risk on a near daily basis. The proliferation of violence and secondary traumatization, combined with increases in levels of poverty and societal moral distress, contribute to declines in academic performance and the negative outcomes of stress experienced by American children and adolescents (Condly, 2006).

Adolescence is an inherently stressful stage of life, given the myriad associated biological, cognitive and social changes (Conger & Petersen, 1984; Hall, 2007; Licitra-Kleckler & Wass, 1993, Munsch & Wampler, 1993). For high school students of color, living in inner-city or low socioeconomic status (SES) communities, the exposure to risk and victimization is compounded by depleted or minimal resources (Meyers & Taylor, 1998). This suggests that, in addition to navigating all of the changes inherent to this stressful developmental stage, high school students of color must also navigate the unique stressors found in their daily environments. These high-risk circumstances serve to amplify the increased need for supportive roles of schools as protective factors and as vehicles for promoting resilience through the lens of persistence for high-risk high school students of color.

Problem Statement

This study aims to address the problem of increased dropout rates and decreased graduation rates experienced by high school students of color, English learners, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged, as compared to other subgroups of high school students (Stark and Noel, 2015). The notion of recovering after an academic setback has often been referred to as academic resilience.

Need achievement and self-worth motivation theories posited by (Covington, 1992; Covington & Omelich, 1991; McClelland, 1965) examine student motives to avoid failure and strive for success. These theories tell us a) why students do what they do; b) how they do it; c) their confidence in being able to do it; d) their ability to surmount obstacles and challenges; and e) their capacity to recover after an academic setback.

The role of schools will be examined as it relates to promoting resilience through the lens of persistence among high school students of color. This, in turn, will inform school based practice in terms of supporting students to overcome aversive situations and permits students to surmount academic and personal challenges without catastrophizing or perpetuating the circumstance.

Purpose Statement

The objective of this study is to examine how schools foster student resilience through the lens of persistence. Given various societal barriers, the

overarching question is, *how do schools support students of color to remain resilient through the lens of persistence by remaining in school and academic achievement, ultimately leading to high school completion?*

A school climate that centers on the study of failure utilizes distorted data to promote negative stereotypes (Harper & Kuykendall, 2012). Pessimism perpetuates an attitude of defeatism, and learned helplessness. Luthar (1991) asserts that when children and even adults, believe they are powerless through learned helplessness, they become passive and restricted in coping abilities.

Conversely, a school climate centered on the study of success helps adolescents thrive in a manner that seeks to avoid learned helplessness. Rather than seeing their students as failing, teacher-student relationships and other personal relationships within the school context exhibit the role of respect and the power of encouragement-support dynamics (Rodriguez, 2007). School climate and school culture are often used interchangeably to address the environment of the school itself. While related, they have two distinct meanings and impact on the actual school environment. Climate is used to describe people's perceptions of an organization or work unit (school). On the other hand, culture relates to the assumptions, values and beliefs that define an organization's identity (Stolp & Smith, 1995; Keefe, Schmitt, Kelley & Miller, 1993). To put it more succinctly, school climate refers mostly to the schools' effect on students, whereas school culture refers more to how teachers and staff work together. For the development of academic resiliency, a school climate that establishes high expectations for all

students must be espoused, along with the supports necessary to live up to high expectations (Bernard, 1993). This combination of expressed expectations along with appropriate supports results in resiliency manifested through persistence of effort.

Research Questions

Inductive reasoning will be employed, based on the author's use of the theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT), in conjunction with patterns that arise from the data.

The research questions that will inform this study are:

1. *How do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted by remaining in school, when they encountered various barriers?*
2. *How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience through the lens of persistence from the perspective of 11th- grade students of color?*
3. *Despite high levels of risk, how do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically when they encountered various barriers?*

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as there are few studies that focus on student resiliency as it relates to high school completion using the lens of persistence. There are countless studies that identify various at-risk factors for non-high school completion that either qualify or quantify the results. Within the dropout literature, there has been a general trend towards offering class-related explanations for race-specific difference in rates of dropouts (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011). These studies, however, “may obscure some reasons that students drop out because they do not take into account the social and economic contexts of school and the communities in which students reside (Stearns & Glennie, 2006, as cited in Bradley & Renzulli, 2011, p. 522).” Rather than focus solely on identifying dropout data from a deficit perspective, this study will highlight students who faced these challenges demonstrating resilience and persistence. Highlighting the strategies these students used, this researcher believes, will help to expand our understanding the role high schools play in influencing student resiliency and persistence.

Outside of the family, school is usually the most unchanging institution in a student’s life. As such, schools occupy an important place as a buffer for students facing difficult circumstances (Wright, 2013). Acknowledging this potential requires teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff to reevaluate and think more deeply about how to best establish relationships with their students that are respectful, motivational, and protective.

The objective of this study is to examine more fully the role of schools as protective factors against various societal and familial risk factors and barriers, and the models of student resiliency through persistence utilized to address these various factors. The literature lists several well-known factors: low-socioeconomic status, undocumented status, low incidence of familial examples of high school completion, stressors, and oppositional cultures. These are the what. The driving question is the how. Given these various societal barriers, what factors or coping mechanisms are utilized by students of color to remain resilient and persevere leading to high school completion and college matriculation, and the contributing role of schools in promoting the development of resilience and persistence.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study will seek to apply the critical race theory (CRT) framework to examine the school environment as the locus for students of color developing resilient and persistent predispositions. Specifically CRT as it applies to high school climate examines the aspiration, ability, and cultural support components necessary for students of color to develop academic resilience through the lens of persistence and make effective choices. Advocacy and aspiration building present crucial roles in developing persistence, which in turn helps to build a sense of college predisposition. CRT posits that when class matters are considered economic power, not solely Whiteness, is the focus. Whereas the dominant culture supports academic ethic and college enrollment, in

subdominant groups, particularly African American and Latino students, there are competing voices that clash with the dominant norms with regard to college attendance (Muhammad, 2008).

As it relates specifically to resiliency and persistence, CRT will be applied to examine those institutional or societal barriers that often cause students to evaluate high school completion from a cost-benefit analysis. Cost-benefit determines that for some students they realize there are institutional barriers to success through education, and thus find greater value in other activities such as getting a job or caring for family (Bradley and Renzulli, 2011). A cost-benefit mindset runs counter to the development of resiliency and its manifestation, persistence.

Combined with the need for a sense of support, is a sense of belonging or relatedness. Several motivational researchers identify belonging or relatedness as one of three basic psychological needs, along with autonomy and competence (Ryan, 1995; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991). Being part of a supportive network, a sense of belonging reduces stress, whereas being deprived of stable and supportive relationships has been shown to have far-reaching and negative consequences (Osterman, 2000). High school students, particularly Black and Hispanic students, tend to rely on trusting relationships with their teachers and counselors more than their White and Asian counterparts, as they are often not able to rely on parents or family members to

help guide or inform their decision- making process (Holland, 2015; Hooker & Brand, 2010; McDonough & Calderone, 2006).

Countering existing deficit notions of student ability, in the minds of the educators on campus and the students themselves, is fundamentally crucial to the development of academic resilience leading to persistence (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin and Allen, 2009). This study will seek to apply the CRT framework to examine the school environment as the locus for students of color developing resilient and persistent predispositions. Specifically CRT, as it applies to high school climate, examines the aspiration, ability, and cultural support components necessary for students of color to develop academic resilience and make effective choices. Advocacy and aspiration building present crucial roles in developing persistence, which in turn helps to build a sense of college predisposition.

Assumptions

This study assumes that current 11th- grade high school students interviewed will be forthcoming with their responses. This study assumes that the information gained will provide for sufficient trustworthiness to improve and enhance current dropout prevention programs. This study also assumes that academic resilience through the lens of persistence is something that can be influenced by school based practices.

Delimitations

This study will not attempt to identify resiliency factors for White or Asian students, instead it will focus solely on identifying those mitigating school based factors for students of color that result in resilience through the lens of persistence. This study will focus only on 11th-grade high school students. The assumption is that 11th-grade students will demonstrate the maturity to be able to reflect on their experiences in a manner that 9th and 10th-grade students will not be able to replicate. Additionally, by virtue of being in the 11th-grade, it is expected these same students will have developed aspects of resiliency and manifest persistence by virtue of their continuation with their high school education.

Definitions of Key Terms

Several key terms will be utilized throughout this study. To establish consistency and clarity of usage, the following definitions will be used.

Resiliency has varied definitions that relate to the response of individuals to adverse circumstance. The literature, primarily defines resiliency as the presence of protective factors such as; personal, familial, social and institutional safety nets that promote the ability to cope with stress; a positive capacity of an individual to respond under pressure (Griffin & Allen, 2006; Richman, Bowen, & Wooley, 2004; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010;). Along with the exploration of the interconnected facets of resilience, it is equally important to conceptualize

resilience as a dynamic process that can be enhanced, as opposed to the competing notion that resilience is a personality trait, which either you have or you do not (Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000).

Persistence, through which this study will examine resilience, will use two definitions. The first points to the self-righting nature of human development, and is manifested by simply remaining in school and not dropping out (Bernard, 1993). The second definition examines persistence through academic resilience. Others, such as Martin (2002); Howard and Johnson (2002), and Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) suggest persistence manifests in academically resilient students who sustain high levels of achievement-motivation and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and ultimately dropping out of school. This aligns with the second definition of academic persistence.

Risk points to the potential for negative outcomes due to societal, familial or institutional barriers. Negative outcomes would include substance abuse, mental health disorders, school dropout, and delinquency (Richman et al., 2004). Luthar et al., (2000) expand upon the persistence construct by establishing that for persistence and risk to be considered, two coexisting conditions must intersect. The student must first be at risk for negative outcomes, then show evidence of positive adaptation despite the adversity encountered.

Barriers as discussed in the extant literature, lists several well-known factors that may or may not contribute to low incidences of resilience and persistence. A partial list of these barriers includes: low socioeconomic status,

undocumented status, low incidence of familial examples of high school completion, stressors, and oppositional cultures (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Farkas, Lleras, & Maczuga, 2002; Felice, 1981; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Halax, 2014; McMillian & Reed, 1994; Reyes & Jason, 1993). Nelson, Schnorr, Powell, and Huebner (2012) state students of color may be at risk for academic failure due to prevailing stressors related to minority status, discrimination, alienating schools, and economic hardship. For Hispanic students, the added stressors of understanding the English language and acculturation, particularly for those students who arrive in the United States after the age of 12 present unique challenges (Halax, 2014; Reyes & Elias, 2011; Reyes & Jason, 1993).

Summary

This first chapter presented the background of the study, specifies the problem of the study, identified the significance of the study, established the theoretical underpinning utilized in this study, and provided a brief overview of the methodology used. The purpose of this study is to expand upon the extant literature and highlight school climate and culture that promotes a collective focus on the study of student success and protective factors such as; school belonging, the role of teacher-student, and counselor relationships as being pivotal to the development of resiliency through the lens of persistence in high school students of color.

The following chapter will examine existing literature and discuss the results and findings from previous studies conducted on the role of schools in promoting the development of resiliency through the lens of persistence in high school students of color.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

Resiliency and resilience theory have emerged as areas of inquiry that seek to explore interpersonal and personal strengths and gifts, as they relate to adversity. In his foundational qualitative study, *The Metatheory of Resilience and Resiliency*, Richardson (2002) points to a paradigm shift from a reductionist problem-oriented approach to one that seeks to nurture existing strengths. Luthar, et al., (2000) supports this shift, stating that instead of focusing solely on protective factors in isolation, research has shifted to understanding protective processes, and how these factors contribute to positive outcomes. Resiliency and resilience theory emerged as the result of phenomenological-focused inquiry designed to identify characteristics of survival, particularly among youth and adolescents living in high risk environments or situations.

Richardson (2002) describes the metatheory of resilience and resiliency as a departure from simply labeling internal or external characteristics or traits that allow individuals to cope with or bounce back from adversity or setbacks. Osterman (2000) expands this focus on resilience and resiliency, through qualitative study, as a shift to a social cognitive perspective of student motivation. Succinctly, resilience theory can be characterized as, “a force within everyone that drives them to seek self-actualization, altruism, wisdom, and harmony with a spiritual source of strength” (Richardson, 2002, p. 313). Werner and Smith

(1982), in a longitudinal ethnographic study of a high-risk community, determined the presence of caring environment inside and outside of the family structure helped adolescents thrive in the face of adversity, by developing protective factors or developmental assets.

Resiliency inquiry can be divided into three waves of focus: *resilient qualities*; *resiliency process*; and *innate resilience*.

Table 1. Three Waves of Resiliency Inquiry (Richardson, 2002)

	Description	Outcome
First Wave: <i>Resilient Qualities</i>	Phenomenological descriptions of resilient qualities of individuals and support systems that predict social and personal success.	List of qualities, assets, or protective factors that help people grow through adversity (i.e. self-esteem, self-efficacy, support systems, etc.)
Second Wave: <i>The Resiliency Process</i>	Resiliency is the process of coping with stressors, adversity, change, or opportunity in a manner that results in the identification, fortification, and enrichment of protective factors.	Describes the disruptive and reintegration process of acquiring the desired resilient qualities described in the first wave. A model that helps clients and students to choose between resilient reintegration back to the comfort zone, or reintegration with loss.
Third Wave: <i>Innate Resiliency</i>	Postmodern multidisciplinary identification of motivational forces within individuals and groups and the creation of experiences that foster the activation and utilization of the forces.	Helps clients and students to discover and apply the force that drives a person towards self-actualization and to resiliently reintegrate from disruptions.

The intersectionality of these waves can then be interpreted to influence high school completion. There are few studies that focus on student resiliency through the lens of persistence as it relates to high school completion and ultimately college matriculation. The extant literature has provided general trends

that offer class-related explanations for race-specific difference in rates of dropouts (Bradley and Renzulli, 2011). Stearns and Glennie (2006) believe that simply identifying trends obscures reasons why students choose to drop out, as they do not take into account the social and economic contexts of school and the communities in which students reside.

Flach (1988, 1997), in a series of phenomenological studies, suggests that resilient qualities are obtained through a law of disruption and reintegration. Furthermore, Richardson (2002) utilizes the term biopsychospiritual homeostasis to describe the state of being in which one has adapted physically, mentally, and spiritually to a set of circumstances, good or bad. Biopsychospiritual homeostasis is more popularly understood as our comfort zone. Both authors support a belief that for resilient qualities to develop, we must experience disruptions to our comfort zone or world view. These disruptions result in either perceived positive or negative outcomes. However, such disruptions allow us to encounter setbacks, experience growth, and develop resilient qualities, which enables most life events to become routine and are less likely to be viewed as disruptive by adding to our world view. Richardson (2002) refers to this process as “resilient reintegration, which strengthens resilient qualities” (p. 312).

Student resiliency and the development of strategies to promote and increase its occurrence through academic ethic, cultural proficiency, and internal locus of control are at the center of high school completion and, moreover, are manifestations of academic, social and emotional resiliency. This literature review describes the benefits of the positive development of academic, social,

and emotional resilience and analyzes interventions and actions within these school-based communities designed to promote its development. Based on the literature, conclusions about how best to promote and develop student resiliency in order to improve student engagement are proposed.

Facets of Resilience

Resilience and resiliency discourse often examine, facets of resilience such as; academic, social, and emotional resilience, in isolation. A more effective discourse explores all three facets as interconnected, and essential and centered on the self- righting nature of human development (Bernard, 1993). Along with the exploration of the interconnected facets of resilience, it is equally important to conceptualize resilience as a dynamic process that can be enhanced, as opposed to the competing notion that resilience is a personality trait, which either you have or you do not (Luthar et al., 2000).

Academic Resilience

Resiliency has varied definitions that relate to the response by individuals to adverse circumstance. Thornton and Sanchez (2010) define resiliency as the ability to cope with stress; a positive capacity of an individual to respond under pressure. Griffin and Allen (2006) offer their perspective of resiliency, as a reaction to a particular event or as a broader response to high-risk environments individuals may encounter. Richman, Bowen and Wooley (2004) further define resilience as an ability to experience adversity and avoid negative outcomes. Negative outcomes would include substance abuse, mental health disorders,

school dropout, and delinquency (Richman et al., 2004). With consideration given to the self-righting nature that Bernard discusses, Luthar et al., (2000), expand upon the resilience construct by establishing that for a student to be considered resilient, two coexisting conditions must intersect. The student must first be at risk for negative outcomes, then show evidence of positive adaptation despite the adversity encountered. Academic resilience relates to the resilient qualities specifically evident in an academic setting. Others, such as Martin (2002); Howard and Johnson (2000); Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) describe academically resilient students as those who sustain high levels of achievement-motivation and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school and ultimately dropping out of school.

Rather than focus on students at risk of academic failure, academic resilience and related constructs attempt to identify those protective factors that account for success and mitigate the influence of risk factors. The extant literature lists several well-known factors that may or may not contribute to high school non-completion such as: low socioeconomic status, undocumented status, low incidence of familial examples of high school completion, stressors, and oppositional cultures (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Farkas, Lleras & Maczuga, 2002; Felice, 1981; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Halax, 2014; McMillian & Reed, 1994; Reyes & Jason, 1993). Nelson, Schnorr, Powell and Huebner (2012) point to the value of exploring risk and resilience as multidimensional, particularly as it relates to individual capacity for successful

and healthy human development. Black and Hispanic students may be at risk for academic failure due to prevailing stressors related to minority status, discrimination, alienating schools, and economic hardship. For Hispanic students, the added stressors of understanding the English language and acculturation, particularly for those students who arrive in the United States after the age of 12 present unique challenges (Halax, 2014; Reyes & Elias, 2011; Reyes & Jason, 1993). Given these various societal barriers, *what factors or coping mechanisms are utilized to remain resilient and persevere towards high school completion and college matriculation?*

Martin (2002), employing a qualitative metatheory perspective, points out that much of the existing research focuses on the energy and drive of students, and not so much on their ability to deal with pressure and setback. Motivation and drive are crucial components to student achievement, as evidenced by possessing a drive to learn, to work effectively, and a desire to fully achieve one's potential (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997; McMillian & Reed, 1994; Geary, 1988). Additional research posits that resilience be viewed as transactional and three dimensional; incorporating person, time, and environment (Nelson et al., 2012; Elias, Parker & Rosenblatt, 2005). However, these components may not be enough to counter academic setbacks, excessive study pressure, or stress.

Academic Resilience and the Four Cs

In his 2002 qualitative study, Martin synthesized three conceptually linked research bases. Utilizing a Student Motivation Wheel, they conceptualize academic resilience and a Student Motivation Scale to measure it. They identify

four positive attributes, referred to as the “four Cs”, that contribute to the development of academic resilience: *self-belief* (confidence), *a sense of control*, *low anxiety* (composure), and *persistence* (commitment). Bernard (1993) refers to these four attributes as *social competence*, *problem-solving skills*, *autonomy*, and a *sense of purpose and future*. Several longitudinal studies focused on students growing up in adversity have pointed to the profound role of schools, family, and community in the successful development of protective factors that facilitate these four Cs. Schools in particular have become a vital refuge for a growing number of Black and Hispanic students, serving as a protective shield against the various vicissitudes of a stressful world (Bernard, 1993).

While the four Cs are crucial attributes for the development of academic resilience, these attributes also overlap and relate to social and emotional resilience. Social competence (self-belief) relates to the ability to elicit positive response from others, particularly adults. Autonomy (sense of control) relates to having a sense of one’s own identity, and the ability to exert some control over one’s environment. Problem-solving skills (composure) and sense of purpose and future (commitment) relate to school cultures and the supportive nature of positive adult relationships in developing academic resilience.

Social Resilience

American children and adolescents are exposed to significant levels and sources of dysfunction and risk on a near daily basis. The proliferation of violence and secondary traumatization, combined with increases in levels of

poverty and societal moral distress, contribute to declines in academic performance and the negative outcomes of stress experienced by American children and adolescents (Condly, 2006). For high school students of color living in inner-city or low socio-economic status (SES) communities, the exposure to risk and victimization is compounded by depleted or minimal resources (Meyers & Taylor, 1998). These high-risk circumstances serve to amplify the supportive roles of schools as vehicles for promoting social resilience or social competence in high-risk youth.

Adolescence is an inherently stressful stage of life, given the myriad associated biological, cognitive and social changes (Conger & Petersen, 1984; Hall, 2007; Licitra-Kleckler & Wass, 1993; Munsch & Wampler, 1993). This suggests that, in addition to navigating all of the changes inherent during this stressful developmental stage, low SES adolescents must also navigate the unique stressors found in their daily environment. Gillock and Reyes (1999) supply additional clarity through their phenomenological study of low-income Mexican Americans, by attaching this context to acculturation stress, and the overriding need to be successful academically.

In his article, *I Keep Me Safe*, Wright (2013) reminds us that “a child whose life is overflowing with challenges doesn’t know when to stop struggling or how to embrace joy” (p. 41). School context, particularly at the secondary levels of middle and high schools, becomes a vehicle of paramount importance in the development of social resiliency.

Distal and Proximal Risk Factors

Interacting factors that contribute to or inhibit the development of social resilience fall into two domains: distal and proximal. Distal risk factors occur in the social context, whereas proximal risk factors relate to the familial or parental context (Meyers and Taylor, 1998). Well-observed distal risk factors include the following: substandard housing, drug trafficking, excess community violence, and culture which can be either magnified or mitigated by the extent of proximal risk factors in conjunction with protective factors. Social resilience determines high levels of functional competency in the face of sustained and intense social and familial stressors (Griffin & Allen, 2006; Meyers & Taylor, 1998; Reyes & Elias, 2011). Social competence (self-belief) relates to the ability to elicit positive supportive responses from others (Meyers & Taylor, 1998; Reyes & Jason, 1992).

Proximal protective factors associated with adolescents developing adaptive outcomes occur in three domains. They include 1) having a supportive family and a positive relationship with at least one parent or other relative (Baldwin, 1990); 2) warm and supportive parenting practices (Wyman, 1991) and 3) positive temperament, and the availability of positive social supports from extended family and adults outside of the family fosters positive ties to the community at large (Garmenzy, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982). The literature is well documented, citing the primal role of parents in promoting individual academic success (Garmenzy, 1991; Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1989). Shade (1983) reminds us that for Blacks and Hispanics, mothers tend to be the primary source

of affection, aspirations, and assistance with academic plans and pursuits. Families in disadvantaged contexts are themselves rendered powerless as a positive support, as they also grapple with the same disadvantages and challenges as their adolescent children. For recent immigrants and non-native English speakers, such as Hispanics, language barriers and acculturation difficulties often compound stress and family dysfunction while simultaneously reducing family supportiveness (Martinez, 1988).

Emotional Resilience

Bernard (1995) asserts that we are born with the innate capacity for resilience. This innate capacity, in turn, permits us to develop characteristics central to developing emotional resilience that includes: *social competence, problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose*. One need look no further than to observe the actions of a newborn baby to know that this is true. Of these, autonomy and sense of purpose are most closely related to the development of emotional resilience. The literature defines autonomy as having a sense of one's own identity and the ability to act independently and exert some degree of control over one's environment through task mastery, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy (Bernard, 1995; Connell, Spencer & Aber, 1994; Luthar, 1991; Martin, 2002; Rivera, 2014; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010).

Need achievement and self-worth motivation theories (Covington, 1992; Covington & Omelich, 1991; McClelland, 1965) examine student motives to avoid failure and strive for success. These theories tell us a) why students do what they

do; b) how they do it; c) their confidence in being able to do it; d) their ability to surmount obstacles and challenges; and e) their capacity to pick themselves up after an academic setback (Martin, 2002). Internal locus of control, or the belief that forces or influences that shape one's life are largely within one's own control, is central to developing and sustaining emotional resilience. Luthar (1991) asserts that learned helplessness is avoided through internal locus of control and the belief that events and outcomes are controllable. Internal locus of control determines whether or not active attempts are made to overcome aversive situations and permits students to surmount academic and personal challenges without catastrophizing or perpetuating the circumstance.

Personality Traits

Three typologies emerge that relate to emotional resilience: the success-oriented student, the failure-avoidant student, and the failure-accepting student (Martin, 2002). Success-oriented students tend to reflect optimism, while adopting a proactive and positive orientation towards their studies and are not easily debilitated by setbacks rather they tend to respond with optimism and energy (Covington & Omelich, 1991; Martin 2001; Martin, Marsch & Debus, 2001a). Students demonstrating internal locus of control willfully draw upon past experiences in which they overcame an obstacle or challenge, as a reference for overcoming a current challenge.

Failure-avoidant students tend to be anxious, live in self-doubt, and are motivated by a fear of failure perpetuated by the uncertainty regarding their ability to avoid failure or achieve success (Alpert & Haber, 1960; Covington & Omelich,

1991). Students operating from an external locus of control perspective, view adversity or setbacks to confirm their lack of control over forces or events that impact their lives. Failure-accepting students, often referred to as having the trait of learned helplessness, have reached a point of acceptance of the inevitability of failure, and no longer strive to avoid failure (Martin, 2002).

All three personality constructs assert that interpersonal contexts influence and shape individual beliefs about themselves within cultural contexts, such as the school. These beliefs about self result in patterns of action that reflect engagement or disengagement, as the case may be, within the school context (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994).

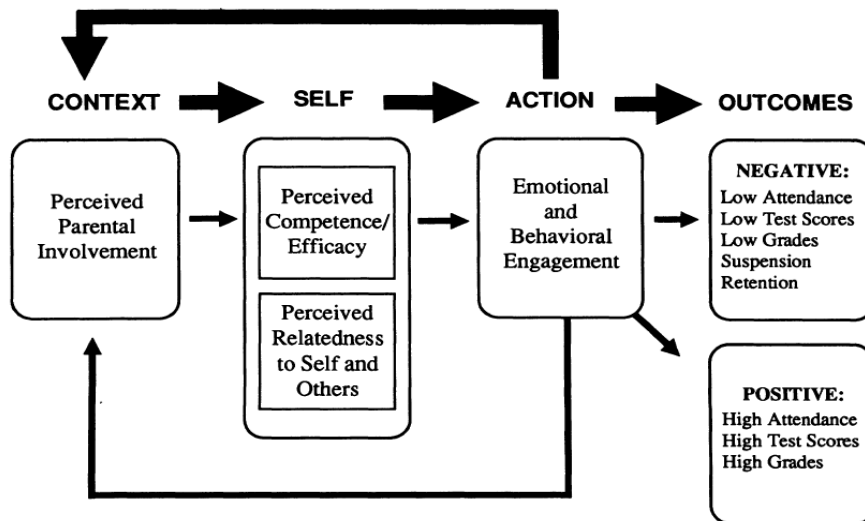


FIG. 1.—Hypothesized model used in fitting New York, Atlanta, and NYC/B/DC data sets

Figure 1. Engagement Process Model (Connell, Spencer & Aber, 1994)

Figure 1 establishes the interpersonal contexts that contribute to shape self-image or individual beliefs, and how these beliefs manifest themselves in patterns of action that reflect either engagement or disengagement.

Schools as Protective Factors

Outside of the family, school is usually the most unchanging institution in a student's life. As such, schools occupy an important place as a buffer for students facing difficult circumstances (Wright, 2013). Acknowledging this potential requires teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff to reevaluate and think more deeply about how to best establish relationships with their students that are respectful, motivational, and protective.

In the United States, children and adolescents (young people aged 13-18) spend a significant portion of their waking hours within a school environment. Several studies indicate nearly 50% of waking hours are spent within the school environment, particularly at the secondary level, due to involvement in athletics and other school-related activities (Condly, 2006; Olsson, Bond, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003). Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States, accounting for 16.3% of the total population. Blacks account for 12.6% of the population (US Census, 2011). The Hispanic population increased by 15.2 million between 2000 and 2010, accounting for over half of the 27.3 million increase in the total population of the United States. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent, which was four times the growth in the total population of 10 percent. The Black population grew by 12 percent from 34.7

million to 38.9 million, compared to the total U.S. population which grew by 9.7 percent, from 281.4 million in 2000 to 308.7 million in 2010 (US Census, 2011). These data indicates that both Hispanic and Black populations are growing at considerably faster rates than other segments of the U.S. population.

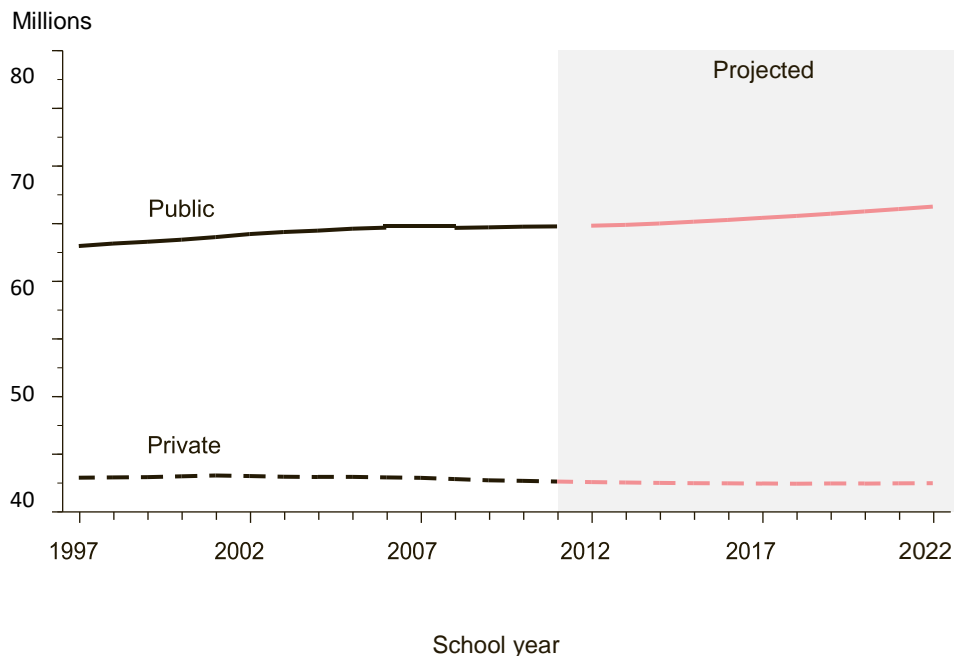


Figure 2. Actual and Projected Enrollment in Elementary and Secondary Schools through Fall 2022 (Hussar and Bailey, 2013)

Figure 2 highlights enrollment projections for public and private schools through 2022. NCES projections indicate an 11 % increase in public school enrollment between 2011 and 2022, compared to a 5 % decrease in private school enrollment during this same time span.

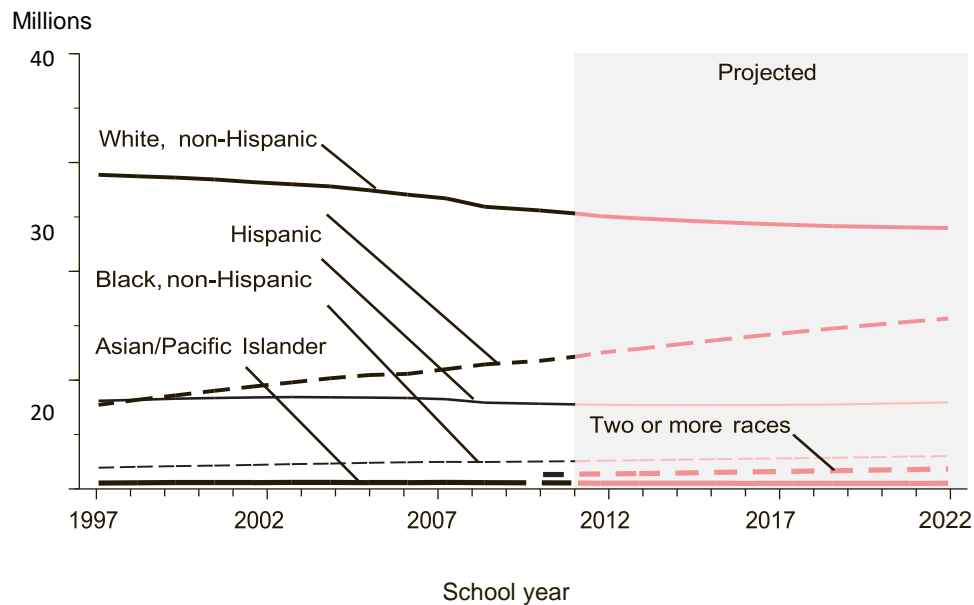


Figure 3. Actual and Projected Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by Race/Ethnicity through Fall 2022 (Hussar and Bailey, 2013)

Figure 3 reflects the changing demographics of public schools through 2022. NCES projections show an overall decline between 2011 and 2022 in White, non-Hispanic by 6 percent. This contrasts with a 2 % increase in Black, non-Hispanic, and a 33 % increase in Hispanic students during this same time span. Taking a long view into these growth patterns, it becomes apparent that, as young Hispanics and Blacks grow into adulthood, they will unequivocally shape American society in the 21st century.

In reforming schools to create environments that support students, we must also look to “forge deliberate cultures of success” (Rodriguez, 2007, p. 1). In their text, *Schooling for Change* Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) echo this sentiment, citing the need for fundamental reforms within high schools to develop

communities of caring and support for young people. Developing supportive school climates that permit students to practice and develop problem solving skills, and a sense of purpose and the future, contributes to the development of academic resilience. Critical race theory seeks to examine and mitigate those institutional or societal barriers that do not create a deliberate culture of success, and that often cause students to evaluate high school completion from a cost-benefit analysis. The cost-benefit perspective establishes that for some students that there are institutional barriers to success in education, and thus, they find greater value in other activities, such as getting a job or caring for family (Bradley and Renzulli, 2011). The level of caring and support within a school provides a powerful indicator of positive outcomes for students.

Transition to High School

Academic resilience has been defined as students who sustain high levels of achievement motivation and performance despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly in school, and ultimately dropping out of school. Alternatively, as it relates to the transition to high school, academic resilience in students is described as a change from students achieving at low levels in the eighth grade and, subsequently, achieving at significantly higher levels by grade 10 (Catterall, 1998; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Related to this is commitment resilience, or the drive to continue despite doubts of one's ability or the eventual outcome (Catterall, 1998). An internal locus of control, or the belief that one largely has control over the forces shaping one's life, has been shown to be a protective factor that permits students to be

resilient (Floyd, 1996; Luthar, 1991; Martin, 2002). The transition from eighth grade to high school is a pivotal educational point, and the success of this transition has lasting implications for students towards developing the commitment resilience necessary to complete high school. In a report to the Southern Regional Educational Board, Bottoms (2008) describes the “make or break” nature of the ninth-grade experience in determining if a student continues on with high school or becomes disenchanting and disengaged.

School leaving or high school non-completion begins during the eighth-grade transition, particularly for low academically performing eighth-grade students. Catterall (1998) reports two constructs that relate to the eighth grade transition: “1) commitment resilience to persist in school for eighth graders who expressed doubts about graduating from high school and 2) academic resilience by grade 10 among eighth graders who showed signs of academic difficulty” (p. 307). School commitment resilience countervails low achieving eighth graders expressing doubts about high school completion by encouraging them to review and improve their assessment of such chances by grade 10. Related to school commitment resilience is commitment risk, expressed as doubt of high school completion. Strong evidence supports that expressed doubts about finishing high school associates strongly with either an increased probability or actual leaving before graduation (Catterall, 1998; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997).

To countervail the prevalence of commitment risk among low performing eighth and ninth-grade students, Bottoms (2008) proposes a ninth-grade design that includes a ninth-grade academy that is heterogeneously grouped, and a

standards-based curriculum specifically designed to get students to grade level in English and mathematics. The prevailing models of ninth-grade academies target at-risk student populations almost exclusively.

Positive Expectations

Adolescents who experience challenging circumstances often come from home environments where behavior is reinforced through violence and domination, rather than rules and incentives (Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Meyers & Taylor, 1998; Reyes & Elias, 2011; Wright, 2013). For adolescents to learn a language other than fear and intimidation, educators must consistently distinguish between rules and discipline, with expectations and rules frequently revisited in a non-punitive manner that expresses great expectations. Promoting a school climate that places emphasis on the study of success, as opposed to the study of failure, is paramount to maintaining high expectations and aspirations and being goal-oriented, with effective problem solving skills contributing to the development of social resilience and competence (Floyd, 1996; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Hall, 2007; Wang, Haertel & Wahlberg, 1994).

The great poet laureate Maya Angelou (n.d.) once said, "Surviving is important, thriving is elegant." Within this statement is centered the very crux of the study of success versus the study of failure. Dalton, Elias and Wanderman (2007) make a distinction between resilience and thriving, whereby they assert that resilience is more closely identified with adequacy, and thriving is more closely linked with excellence.

Carver (1998) posits that thriving is linked to psychological constructs, which reflect a decreased reactivity to stressors, combined with faster recovery (i.e. resilience) from stressors leading to higher levels of functioning post-stressor. While thriving is the ultimate aspiration, reversing risk must first start with resilience. When individuals possess the ability to endure (resilience) and thrive, one begins to see the effects that sustainable resilience has upon successes personally, educationally and organizationally (Reyes & Elias, 2011). Carter (1998) suggests resilience denotes a return to a homeostatic prior condition, whereas thriving refers to an enhanced, better-off afterwards condition. However, a student who may successfully cope with significant stressors at one point in his/her life may have difficulty and react negatively to other stressors at a later time (Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 1993, 1987). Schools as protective factors provide a set of circumstances and support that reaffirms positive developmental outcomes and trajectories, even when faced with adversity (Masten, 2001; Nelson et al, 2012).

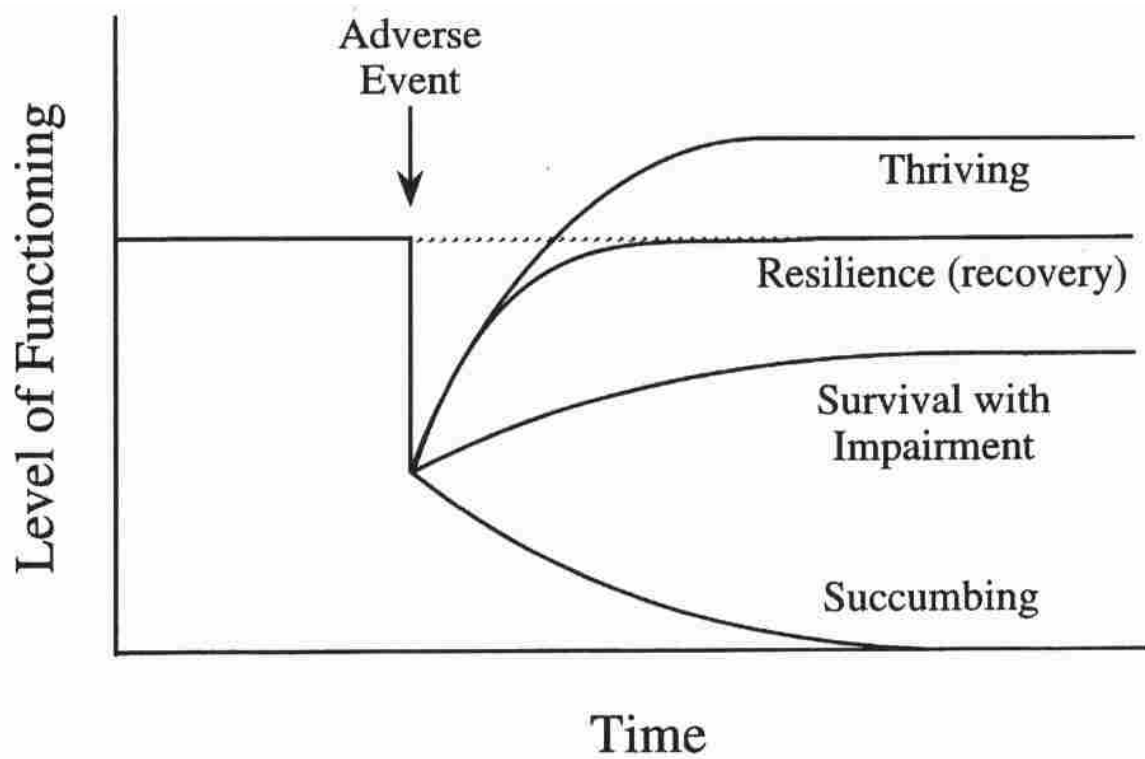


Figure 4. Potential Responses to Trauma (Carter, 1998)

Figure 4 depicts Carter's model for response to trauma from the standpoint of resilience and thriving. Figure 4 conceptualizes possible responses including 1) a downward slide leading to eventual succumbing, 2) survival with impairment, 3) recovery to a homeostatic condition, and 4) recovery to a superior level of functioning than previously

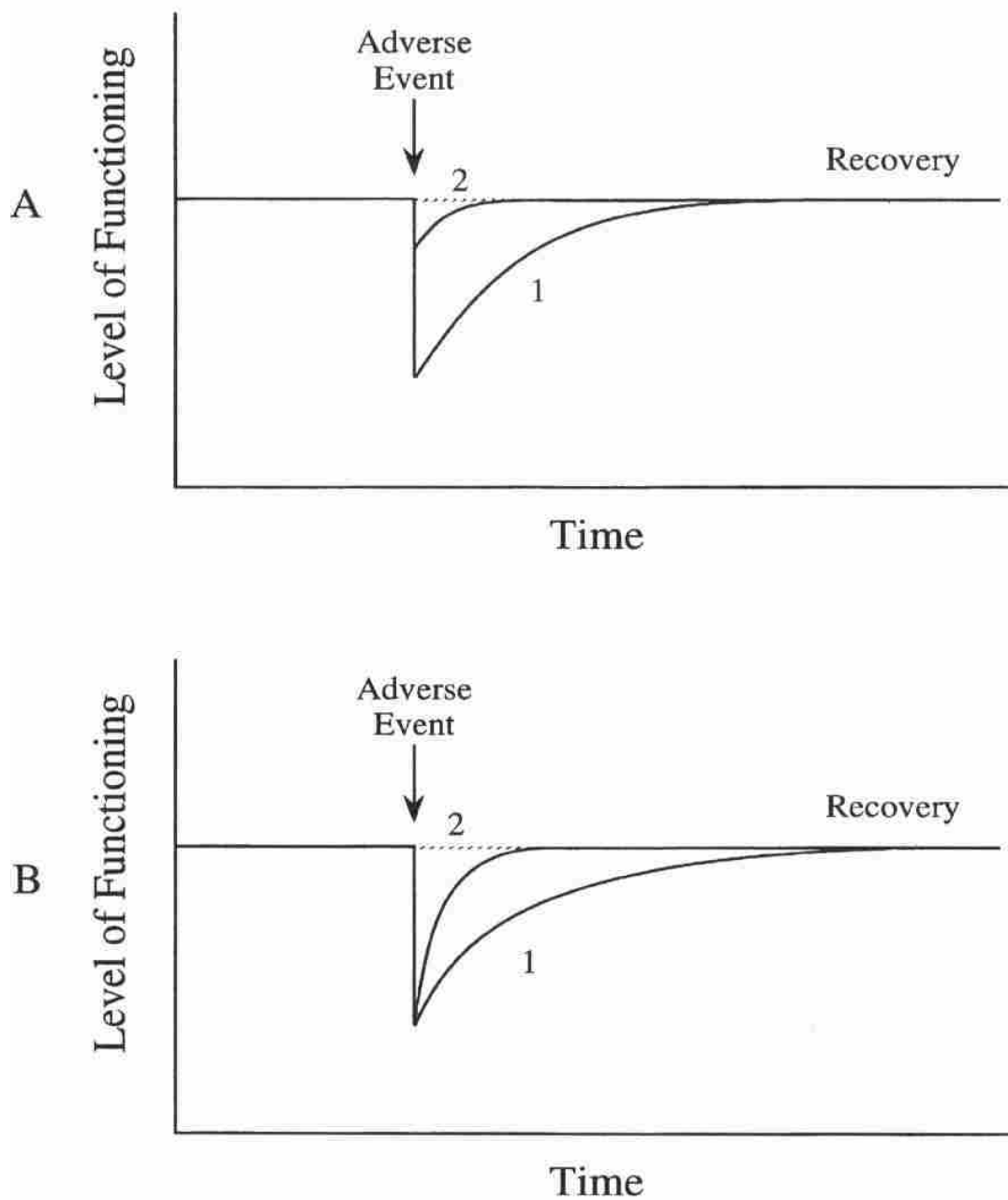


Figure 5. Two Concepts of Adaptation (Carter, 1998)

Figure 5 models two responses to adversity through resilience that presents a change in the speed of recovery. 5A conceptualizes a gradual return to baseline prior to the adverse event. 5B models a faster recovery, based upon prior

exposure to the adverse event, representing the intersection of resilience and thriving.

Throughout the literature and social media, we are frequently apprised of the odds stacked against Black and Hispanic males. Rarely, however, are we presented with studies that highlight their ability to competently move beyond the risks they encounter (Hall, 2007). Terms such as “competent”, “aspiring”, or “motivated” are rarely used to describe males of color or their performance in school. The pervasive societal impression of Black and Hispanic males is one of dysfunction, deviant, cold, and animalistic (Cose, 2000; Dohrn, 2000; Madhubuti, 1991). Floyd (1996) asserts, as a result of this global view of ability, “teachers and parents begin to believe that failure is the norm for these students” (p. 181). A school climate that centers on the study of failure utilizes distorted data to promote negative stereotypes. Pessimism perpetuates an attitude of defeatism and learned helplessness. Luthar (1991) asserts that when children, as well as adults, believe they are powerless through learned helplessness, they become passive and restricted in coping abilities.

Conversely, a school climate centered on the study of success helps adolescents thrive in a manner that seeks to avoid learned helplessness. Through the identification of characteristics, factors and mechanisms that facilitate high risk students to be successful, schools can apply this knowledge to create climates designed to help counter risk factors. (Nelson et al., 2012). Rather than seeing their students as failing, teacher-student relationships and other personal relationships within the school context exhibit the role of respect

and the power of encouragement-support dynamics (Rodriguez, 2007). A success-oriented climate builds on the strengths of each student, which in turn exerts a powerful motivating protective factor. This is particularly true for “students who receive the opposite message from their families and communities” (Bernard, 1993, p. 46). The extant literature establishes the relationship among school structure, culture, climate and student achievement (Nelson et al, 2012; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010; Rodriguez, 2007 & 2013; Wayman, 2002).

Cultures of Success

The need for caring teachers is a major concern, particularly for high school students (Bernard, 1993; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

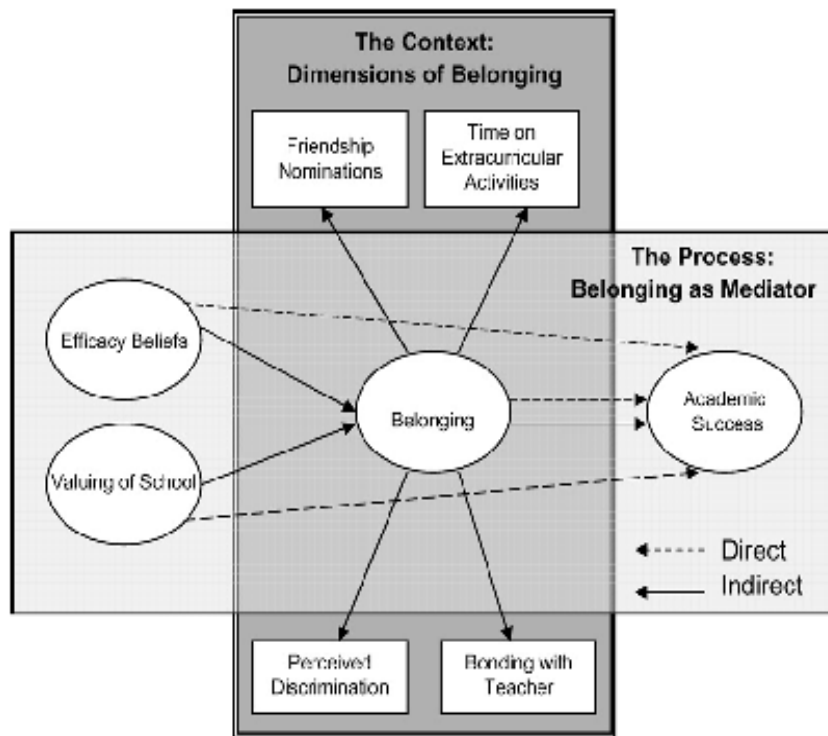


Fig. 1. Theoretical model: Dimensions of belonging and direct vs. indirect model.

Figure 6. Dimensions of Belonging (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005)

Figure 6 conceptualizes dimensions of belonging through the context of peer friendship (friendship nominations), extracurricular activities, perceived discrimination and bonding with teachers. These four dimensions as mediators have a direct and indirect effect on the valuing of school, self-efficacy, and ultimately academic success.

School climate and school culture are often used interchangeably to refer to the environment of the school. While related, they have two distinct meanings and impact on the actual school environment. Climate is used to describe people's perceptions of an organization or work unit (school). Culture relates to

the assumptions, values and beliefs that define an organization's identity (Keefe, Schmitt, Kelley & Miller, 1993; Stolp & Smith, 1995). More succinctly, school climate refers mostly to the school's effect on students, whereas school culture refers more to how teachers and staff work together. For the development of academic resiliency, a school climate that establishes high expectations for all students must be espoused along with the supports necessary to live up to high expectations (Bernard, 1993). Hearing consistent teacher messages stating "this work is important" I know you can do it; "I won't give up on you" plays to the strength of the student and provides a powerful motivating influence (Bernard, 1991). Combined with the need for a sense of support is a sense of belonging or relatedness. Several motivational researchers identify belonging or relatedness as one of three basic psychological needs that are essential to human growth and development, along with autonomy and competence (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1995).

School Belonging

Being part of a supportive network, a sense of belonging reduces stress, whereas being deprived of stable and supportive relationships has been shown to have far-reaching and negative consequences (Osterman, 2000). Nelson et al., (2012), in their meta-analysis of the role of schools in developing resilience in students, highlight the importance of student-teacher relationships that facilitate mentoring. High school students, particularly students of color, tend to rely on trusting relationships with their teachers and counselors more than their White and Asian counterparts, as they are often not able to rely on parents or family

members to help guide or inform their decision making process (Holland, 2015; Hooker & Brand, 2010; McDonough & Calderone, 2006). Currently, ethnic minority students (Hussar and Bailey, 2013) comprise 46.9% of the total public school population. Of this number, 41.7% consists of Black and Hispanic students, with Hispanics totaling 26.4%.

Typically, American classrooms are characterized by practices that support the dominant culture and, as a result scholars have suggested that school belonging may become increasingly critical to the growing number of ethnic and language minority students (Delpit, 1995; Phelan, Yu, & Davison, 1994; Ryan & Patrick 2001). Simply stated, for ethnic minority as well as majority student groups, to engage and be successful in school, a sense of belonging within the school setting must develop.

Three elements salient to the development of these trusting relationships have emerged in a 2007 comparative case study of two high schools. The three elements that emerged were; the importance and authenticity of personal relationships, the role of respect, and the power of encouragement-support dynamics (Rodriguez, 2007). Of these, the authenticity of relationships, played the most significant role in student engagement and trust. Authenticity of relationships often translates to personalization of relationships, and is measured by immediate and frequent contact, and having access to school adults throughout the school day. This is significant when students are faced with serious personal challenges that often have nothing to do with school (Rodriguez, 2007).

The Role of the Counselor and Academic Ethic

For students in urban, low-income, underserved communities, the high school counselor fills varied roles. These roles include: advocate, agent, aspiration builder, and college knowledge provider, roles that are crucial in assisting students in developing academic resilience, developing a college predisposition, and counteracting deficit notions with regard to their academic potential, and college worthiness. (Valencia, 1997). Countering existing deficit notions of student ability, in the minds of the educators on campus and the students themselves, is fundamentally crucial to academic resilience and gaining access to the most basic college preparatory resources (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin and Allen, 2009). In this capacity, the high school counselor fulfills one of their most important roles, aspiration building, which in turn facilitates the other components of college knowledge attainment.

In *Trust Matters* Tschannen-Moran (2014) discusses the five facets of trust- benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence - required to establish effective school leadership. These same five facets of trust are the crucial underpinnings of establishing caring and effective student-counselor relationships. Holland (2015) states that “Trust functions as both a bridge and a barrier to social capital” (p.245). An effective trusting student-counselor relationship enhances the bridge effect and minimizes the barrier effect, enabling access to information and enhancing social capital that can facilitate the development of academic resilience, high school completion and, ultimately

college attendance. It provides the intentionality or personal regard for extending oneself for others beyond what is formally required (Holland, 2015).

The absence of trust results in students being less likely to meet with their counselor, ask questions, or seek guidance in the college application process. These barriers to trust can become institutionalized when the role of the counselor is interpreted as inconsistent, contradictory and ambiguous (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Despite the difficulties associated with establishing trusting relationships, research emphasizes the transformative nature of trust in schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Forsyth, Adams, & Hoy, 2011; Van Maele, Forsyth & Van Houtte, 2014).

Two frameworks address the bridge versus barrier phenomenon as it relates to high school counselors and their student-counselor relationships: Critical race theory (CRT) and opportunity to learn (OTL). College knowledge is defined by Conley (2010), as information, formal and informal, stated and unstated, necessary for gaining admission to and navigating within the post-secondary system.

CRT posits that when class matters are considered, it is about economic power, not solely Whiteness. Whereas the dominant culture supports academic ethic and college enrollment, in subdominant groups, particularly African American and Latino students, there are competing voices that clash with the dominant norms with regard to college attendance (Muhammad, 2008). OTL was initially conceived by the International Association for the Evaluation of

Educational Achievement (IEA) as a measurement tool to determine if learning was the result of ability or learning differences (Schwartz, 1995).

CRT and OTL point to the impact counselors have on components of college preparation and advising tasks that are central to their purpose. These components include a) structuring information and organizing activities that foster academic resilience and support students' college aspirations; b) assisting parents in understanding their role in fostering and supporting academic resilience and college aspirations; c) assisting students with academic preparation for college; d) supporting and influencing students in college decision-making; and e) organizationally focusing their respective schools on its college mission (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 2005a, 2005b).

CRT, as it applies to high school counseling, examines the aspiration, ability, and cultural support components necessary for minority students to develop academic resilience and make effective college choices. Advocacy and aspiration building are crucial roles in helping to build a sense of college predisposition. A significant challenge to these counseling efforts centers on countering stereotype threat. Stereotypes and stereotype threat have been shown to present major barriers to academic success for African Americans and other minority groups (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Stereotype threat is anxiety or stress triggered by the fear that one might fulfill or be associated with a relevant stereotype (Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998). In educational settings, such as a high school, the anxiety of inadvertently confirming stereotype has been shown to interfere with and depress academic achievement.

The depression of academic achievement is linked to the reduction of the working memory capacity. Working memory capacity is linked to the ability to focus one's attention on a single task, while remaining unfocused on task-irrelevant thoughts (Engle, 2002). To state simply, a student is so focused on trying not to fulfill the existing stereotype, their ability to perform academically is affected. This holds particularly true when students hold the perception that faculty and staff view them as intellectually incapable and, thereby, undeserving of college information for admission (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). These deficit notions contribute to African American and Latino students being perceived as less academically able as their White counterparts, and pushed towards vocational education (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Valencia, 2002).

The countervailing concept to stereotype threat is academic ethic, in which African American, Hispanics, and other minority group students, are determined to not conform to the stereotype prescribed to them (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013, Zhang & Smith, 2011). High school counselors, along with faculty and staff, have a major role in helping students counter stereotype threat by providing a nurturing school climate, facilitating the development of academic resilience, and promoting academic ethic. Students who possess an academic ethic in high school have been more likely to make a smoother transition to college, and to maintain this same academic ethic once in college (Zhang & Smith, 2011).

Summary

Most studies of resilience suggest that it is a dynamic process and is best thought of in continuous terms, which suggests that resiliency can be learned and improved upon (Bernard, 1995; Luthar et al, 2000; Osterman, 2000). For educators, this establishes the importance of experience and conditions that serve to fortify students so that they persist through the inevitability of life's difficulties. The interactions of school success and resiliency can provide a structural basis for planned interventions directed at struggling learners (Bernard 1995; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010).

Three factors influence the resilient and persistent nature of students. The first factor addresses intelligence, temperament, and self-view, often manifested through academic ethic, success-orientation, and internal locus of control. The intersection of the above referenced traits reaffirms the need for self-esteem, self-worth, freedom, order, and purpose in life in resilient students (Richardson, 2002). The second factor focuses on family and family support, and having a supportive family and a positive relationship with at least one parent or other relative. Proximal protective factors associated with adolescents developing resilience also point to a positive temperament and the availability of positive social supports from extended family and adults outside of the family these factors foster a predisposition to persistence as a result of positive ties to the community at large. The third factor relates to the second and notes the external supports which play a crucial role in resiliency and persistence. Particularly for students of color who, as a group, place emphasis on interdependence,

cooperation, and respect, school belonging plays a pivotal role in the development of resilience (Reyes & Elias, 2011).

As it relates to supportive adults outside of the family, Floyd (1996) reminds us “selected teachers were frequently cited as motivating influences in their quest for academic achievement” (p. 185). The literature demonstrates that schools have the power to overcome incredible risk factors in students and replace those risk factors with support and learned adaptations. Schools that embrace these ideals and understand the importance of developing school cultures of success are better equipped to promote protective and persistence building factors among their students of color.

The next section will describe the research design and methodology of this study. Other areas covered will include: research setting; research sample; data collection and analysis; trustworthiness, and researcher positionality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The objective of this study was to examine how schools foster student resilience. Given various societal barriers, the overarching question was how do schools support students of color to remain resilient through the lens of persistence of staying in school and academic achievement, ultimately leading to high school completion?

This study will seek to apply the CRT framework to examine the school environment as the locus for students of color developing resilient and persistent predispositions. Specifically CRT, as it applies to high school climate, examines the aspiration, ability, and cultural support components necessary for students of color to develop academic resilience and make effective choices. Advocacy and aspiration building present crucial roles in developing persistence, which in turn helps to build a sense of college predisposition.

Research Design

This study employed a Qualitative approach with emphasis on phenomenology. Creswell (2013) states that a phenomenological study should focus on describing the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences for a concept or phenomenon. Based on the desire to understand

and describe the lived experience of resiliency and persistence, the hermeneutical phenomenological approach was determined to be the best fit. “Hermeneutical phenomenology interprets the texts of life” (Creswell, 2013, p. 79).

CRT was applied to examine those institutional or societal barriers that often cause students to evaluate high school completion from a cost-benefit analysis. Cost-benefit determines that for some students they realize there are institutional barriers to success through education, and thus find greater value in other activities such as getting a job or caring for family (Bradley and Renzulli, 2011). CRT considers the role of stereotypes and stereotype threat, and the resulting barriers to academic success, resiliency and persistence for African Americans and other minority groups (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Stereotype threat is anxiety or stress triggered by the fear that one might fulfill or be associated with a relevant stereotype (Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998). In educational settings, such as a high school, the anxiety of inadvertently confirming the stereotype has been shown to interfere with and depress academic achievement. CRT also examines the school environment as the locus for students of color to develop resilient and persistent predispositions. CRT, as it applies to high schools, specifically examines the aspiration, ability, and cultural support components necessary for students of color to develop academic resilience and make effective choices.

Inductive reasoning was employed, based on the theoretical framework of CRT along with patterns that arose from the data. The research questions that informed this study were:

- 1. How do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted by remaining in school when they encountered various barriers?*
- 2. How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience through the lens of persistence from the perspective of 11th - grade students of color?*
- 3. Despite high levels of risk, how do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically whey they encountered various barriers?*

Research Setting

The setting for this study was a culturally diverse urban high school in Southern California. The problems of practice model determined that this study would be conducted at the primary researcher's own school. The primary researcher was aware of the potential implications of power and influence, given the primary researcher's role as principal, and took measures throughout this study to avoid direct implications and to shield participants' identities. A proxy recruiter, along with two proxy interviewers were utilized. All proxy co-researchers completed CITI training. Support and consent for this research was

obtained from the district office of the target school. The study and data collection was conducted during the second semester of the 2016-2017 school year, and was completed in early June 2017. The age group of the participants involved in this study presented a limit to the complete anonymity for participants. Clear and consistent measures were taken by all researchers, primary and proxy, to maintain confidentiality throughout all phases of recruitment, information sessions, and data collection. Specific focus was applied to the interview sessions. All participants were strongly encouraged via the proxy interviewers to keep the interviews and resulting discussions confidential.

Research Sample

70 participants were recruited from current 11th- grade students at a culturally diverse urban high school in Southern California in order to achieve a maximum variation sample. Current total enrollment at the target high school was, approximately, 1,800. Current demographics at the target high school were; Hispanic/Latino, 75%; African-American, 13%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 1%; and Multiple/No Response, 11%. The 11th- grade at the target high school consisted of 355 students. The demographics for this population were; 177 male and 178 female, with 309 Hispanic/Latino, 42 African-American, and 3 Asian/Pacific Islander.

The data collected for this study was derived from this pool of 70 participants who were randomly selected from the entire pool of three hundred fifty-five 11th- grade students. Since the target population needed to be identified

based on risk and resilience factors, a selection criteria (see Appendix B) were developed and utilized that facilitated this. From these 70 recruited participants, a final group of 26 was selected based on those who followed through with all of the signed consent and student assents.

Recruitment of participants was facilitated through the 11th- grade counselor at the target high school, serving as proxy recruiter, utilizing the described selection criteria to achieve the desired stratification for each participant. Once potential participants were identified, letters of invitation for a series of informational meetings were sent home via the potential participants.

The proxy recruiter also conducted the informational meeting for parents and participating students with a question and answer session to address any existing concerns. Participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of their involvement in this research study. Translated forms as well as spoken language translators were provided to reiterate the voluntary nature of their involvement in this study. Signed parental consent, audio consent, and student assent was obtained prior to beginning research activities. Two proxy interviewers were used to conduct the interviews. Prior to each participants' interview, student assent was reestablished. The primary researcher had access to the participant responses, but was not able to connect or link them to a specific participant.

A maximum variation sampling permitted cross stratification across a range of variables such as ethnicity, socioeconomic groupings, high and low risk factors, as well as high and low academic resilience while maintaining the ability

to identify patterns through the lens of persistence across these variations (Glesne, 2011). The target population was identified based on risk and resilience factors, utilizing the selection criteria (see Appendix B) that facilitated this.

Primary risk factors such as familial composition and socioeconomic status were identified. Other risk factors such as; being an English Learner, identified as a Special Education student, or being a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) student were also considered. Similarly, primary academic resilience factors such as grade point average and on track progress towards graduation versus being credit deficient were identified. Other resilience factors such as; enrollment in Advanced Placement classes, or in academic based programs such as, Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program were also considered. AVID is a nationally recognized program designed to promote first generation college attendance. Enrollment in AVID is voluntary.

The prevalence of risk factors when compared to academic resiliency factors, determined the strata of each participant. The result was a sample that reflected high risk factors/high academic resilience, high risk factors/ low academic resilience, low risk factors/high academic resilience, and low risk factors/low academic resilience (see tables 2 -5). Pseudonyms were utilized for all participants.

Table 2. High Risk Factors/High Academic Resilience

	Butch	Jeffrey	Michelle	Lonnie	Gwen	Alice	Linda
<i>Risk Factors</i>							
Low Socioeconomic Status	1	1			1		
Single Parent Home				1		1	1
Grandparent/Aunt/Guardian		1	1				
Dual Parent Home	1				1		
Foster/Homeless							
Special Education							
English Learner							
<i>Familial Education Level</i>							
Non HS Completion	1	1			1	1	
HS Completion							1
Some College				1			
Bachelor's degree							
Master's degree			1				
<i>Academic Resilience Factors</i>							
High G.P.A. (> 3.0)		1					
Moderate G.P.A. (>2.0)	1		1	1	1	1	1
Low G.P.A. (< 2.0)							
AP/Honors			1				1
On-Track for Graduation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Credit Deficient							

Table 3. High Risk Factors/Low Academic Resilience

	Bill	Veda	Janet	Patricia	Dana	Stanley	Sissy
<i>Risk Factors</i>							
Low Socioeconomic Status	1			1	1		
Single Parent Home					1	1	
Grandparent/Aunt/Guardian		1	1				
Dual Parent Home				1			1
Foster/Homeless	1						
Special Education	1		1		1		
English Learner							1
<i>Familial Education Level</i>							
Non HS Completion					1	1	1
HS Completion	1	1	1	1			
Some College							
Bachelor's degree							
Master's degree							
<i>Academic Resilience Factors</i>							
High G.P.A. (> 3.0)							
Moderate G.P.A. (>2.0)							
Low G.P.A. (< 2.0)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Credit Deficient	1	1	1	1	1	1	
On-Track for Graduation							1
AP/Honors				1			

Table 4. Low Risk Factors/High Academic Resilience

	Edna	Gail	Charles	Richard	David	William	Brenda	Sharon	Pamela
<i>Risk Factors</i>									
Low Socioeconomic Status					1		1		
Single Parent Home								1	
Grandparent/Aunt/Guardian									
Dual Parent Home	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1
Foster/Homeless									
Special Education									
English Learner									
<i>Familial Education Level</i>									
Non HS Completion				1					
HS Completion		1					1		
Some College			1			1			1
Bachelor's degree	1							1	
Master's degree									
<i>Academic Resilience Factors</i>									
High G.P.A. (> 3.0)				1		1	1	1	1
Moderate G.P.A. (>2.0)	1	1	1		1				
Low G.P.A. (< 2.0)									
Credit Deficient									
On-Track for Graduation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
AP/Honors	1			1		1	1	1	1
MESA: Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Art		1							

Table 5. Low Risk Factors/Low Academic Resilience

	Johnny	Lisa	Joseph
<i>Risk Factors</i>			
Low Socioeconomic Status			
Single Parent Home			
Grandparent/Aunt/Guardian			
Dual Parent Home	1	1	1
Foster/Homeless			
Special Education	1		
English Learner			
<i>Familial Education Level</i>			
Non HS Completion			
HS Completion		1	1
Some College	1		
Bachelor's degree			
Master's degree			
<i>Academic Resilience Factors</i>			
High G.P.A. (> 3.0)			
Moderate G.P.A. (>2.0)			
Low G.P.A. (< 2.0)	1	1	1
Credit Deficient	1	1	1
On-Track for Graduation			
AP/Honors			

Research Data

The interview protocol utilized for this study was modified from a previous dissertation in 2010 (see Appendix C). The primary researcher obtained permission to utilize the interview guide as a basis for formulating the interview protocol for this study, and to modify to suit this study (see Appendix D). The interview questions were grouped into three categories that aligned with the research questions. The three categories were: family support and expressed high academic expectations, perceptions of school and relationships, and student experiences with success and challenges. Inductive reasoning was employed to identify themes that emerged from these categories. The data collected from this study identified themes, concepts and participant perspectives that informed decisions related to policy and procedures designed to increase the development of student persistence. The desire was to apply the data gained from this study to expand our understanding of the impact schools have on establishing campus cultures centered on student success, and the resulting increase in the student's sense of belonging. These two constructs are particularly important for students of color in promoting and developing academic, social and emotional resiliency, and are vital constructs to developing persistence (Hall, 2007; Griffin & Allen, 2006; Floyd, 1996; Wang, Haertel & Wahlberg, 1994).

Data Collection

The 26 participants agreed to a single semi-structured interview session. All interview sessions occurred after dismissal, no participant was asked to miss instructional class time in order to facilitate the data collection for this study. Each interview session lasted a maximum of 45 minutes. The three proxy co-researchers collaborated to distribute the recruited participants equally, and establish a specific group of participants for each interviewer. All interviews were conducted using the same interview protocol (see Appendix E) and audio recorded, using a one-on-one format to ensure the complete capturing of participants' experiences. The proxy interviewers determined which participants were contacted for follow-up or clarifying questions. All interviews and subsequent follow-up sessions, were conducted by the assigned proxy interviewer. The audio recorder and recordings remained with each proxy interviewer, in a secure location at their homes, until each interviewer had completed their full complement of assigned interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, the audio recorders were turned over to the primary researcher, and were then stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of qualitative analysis, obtained using a modified application of Creswell's triangular model (2013). Creswell's model employed multiple interviews to triangulate the resulting data. Due to the age of the

participants, a modification of this approach was applied. To ensure accuracy, transcripts of each interview were shared with each participant via the assigned proxy interviewer for member checking. Each participant was able to review their respective transcript for accuracy, and provide an opportunity for each participant to edit or strike their responses.

A phenomenological approach was utilized to describe the lived experiences of the participants, and to identify common meaning among their experiences. Based on this researcher's desire to understand and describe the lived examples of resiliency, the hermeneutical phenomenological approach was the appropriate fit.

Individual interviews were transcribed using a transcription service to maximize confidentiality of the participants, and coded utilizing NVivo 10 software. Each transcribed interview was read in its entirety for narrative analysis, to obtain an understanding of how each participant related their lived experiences. Significant passages were highlighted, to develop clusters of meaning, which facilitated the development of themes. Moustakas (1994) refers to this step as horizontalization. Attention was paid to the specific meaning made of the various lived experiences and the shifts in that meaning indicated by the participants. This facilitated the interrelating of themes and description. Recurring themes and concepts were supported by relevant quotes from the extant literature. Inductive reasoning was employed, based on the theoretical framework of CRT along with patterns that arose from the data.

A single semi-structured interview, per participant was conducted in a one-on-one format. A phenomenological approach typically employs multiple interviews to ensure accuracy of the data obtained. Due to the age of the participants, a modification of this approach was applied. Member checking of interview transcripts was utilized to ensure the accuracy of participant statements and perspectives, in the absence of a pre-determined second or third interview.

Trustworthiness

Data collection consists of qualitative components, obtained using a modification of Creswell's triangulation model (2013). Transcripts of each interview were shared with each participant via the assigned proxy interviewer for member checking, to review for accuracy, and to provide an opportunity for each participant to edit or strike their responses. These multiple sources of data were also shared with other researchers to obtain feedback on the researcher's analysis of the collected data. The objective of this study was to examine how schools through school organizational factors influence the development of resiliency in students of color, examined through the lens of persistence. A central focus was the relationship between students, school staff, and how those relationships influenced the development of persistence. This researcher acknowledges that each party had different interpretations of each other, or even the same events. As such, those interpretations were reported with the full knowledge that those interpretations cannot always be verified.

Positionality of the Researcher

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I’ll try again tomorrow” Mary Anne Radmacher. (n.d.).

This simple yet pithy quote captures the essence of resilient behavior and the associated persistence students of color must employ to counter various societal roadblocks to reach academic and personal success. This quote also underscores the role schools are charged with, in alleviating these roadblocks, through supportive climates and promoting cultures of success. This quote, in the form of a plaque, occupies a very prominent place in my office, something I can look to, and reflect upon during those difficult moments as a high school principal. As a person of color, more specifically a Black male, my worldview as it relates to encountering societal roadblocks, and developing resilient behaviors and persistence spans both my personal and professional life. Within this resiliency research, I am both an insider and an outsider.

Since the publication of *“A Nation at Risk”* in the 1980s, deficit descriptors such as; at risk, latch key, single parent home, and low socioeconomic have dominated the discourse, particularly as it relates to students of color in terms of low academic success, and high non-completion rates for high school. From third grade through twelfth grade all of those descriptors applied to me. Within a year after my parent’s divorce during my third grade year, my father decided to disconnect himself from the lives of my sisters and me. My mother with three children moved from a relatively quiet neighborhood in Northeast Washington,

D.C., to the Congress Heights neighborhood in Southeast Washington, D.C.

Though relatively short in distance, approximately 11 miles, the two quadrants of Washington could not be more different.

As a young Black male, without a father or father figure in the home, I had to learn and navigate the challenges of the streets of Congress Heights. It was the high expectations and the influence of my “three mothers”; my biological mother, my godmother, and my grandmother, that kept me on the straight and narrow. That is not to say, that I didn’t “dabble” here and there, but the influence and voiced expectations made it clear to me that failure was not acceptable. Failure in this instance meaning: not completing high school, and succumbing to the challenges of the street. Conversely, the high expectations voiced made it clear to me that I was going to college; it was simply a matter of where. That, plus the three daily city bus rides to attend school in my old Northeast neighborhood, and later attending a private high school, required me to apply courage, resiliency, and persistence on a daily basis in order to address school and community demands. Throughout the literature, resilience has many definitions, but at the core as it relates to adolescents, resilience describes students who sustain high levels of achievement-motivation, and performance despite the presence of stressful events. Persistence can be stated in simple terms, as the outward manifestation of these resilient qualities.

Additionally, for a student to be considered resilient, the student must first be at risk for negative outcomes (Martin, 2002; Howard & Johnson, 2000;

Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Growing up, my “mothers” knew that the statistics were stacked against me. I, on the other hand, did not realize that I was not supposed to succeed. I only knew what the constant message was from my “mothers”. This message in turn, gave me the strength and focus to remain persistent, achieve academically, and successfully avoid the negative outcomes of the streets. I employed this same focus when I matriculated to Ball State University (BSU) in Muncie, Indiana. BSU was a school of 18,000 students with 2% minority enrollment. It was at BSU that I first encountered racism in its true and ugliest form; from professors and classmates alike. To counter the effects of stereotype threat, I employed integrity and academic ethic. From this perspective, I have been an insider. The persistence manifested itself in that I remained and graduated from BSU, despite incidents that on two occasions caused me to consider transferring to another university. It was the reassuring words of my mother saying, “If you start running now, you will be running for the rest of your life”, that gave me the strength to persist at BSU.

I entered education as a second career in 1992 and taught in the District of Columbia Public Schools until I moved to Pasadena, California in July 2000. I began my administrative career in 2003 as Dean of Students at Pasadena High School, the largest and most diverse high school in the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD). The city of Pasadena and PUSD are both urban entities, far removed from the carefully crafted and marketed Rose Bowl/Rose Parade image. In 2006 I accepted an Assistant Principal position in the Montebello Unified School District (MUSD), and had to both embrace and employ resilient

behaviors as an outsider. I did not know it at the time of my appointment, but found out within my first year, that in 2006, I was the first Black site administrator in the history of MUSD! Being the “lonely only”, presented challenges, as well as opportunities.

The challenges manifested through claims of reverse racism. The opportunities materialized as I was able to educate parents and students through my calm demeanor and professionalism. MUSD as a district was approximately 96% Hispanic/Latino. Bell Gardens High School was approximately 98% Hispanic/Latino. As a Black administrator in charge of campus-wide discipline, disgruntled parents and students would sometimes espouse reverse racism whenever they disagreed with a particular disciplinary action. Instead of being defensive, I used these opportunities to educate parents and students. I first related my story to establish empathy and connection, and then employed a calm and professional demeanor to demonstrate fairness, and leniency of discipline when it was appropriate. Towards the end of the first year, the claims of reverse racism significantly decreased. Instead of giving in, I drew upon the resilient and persistent qualities I had developed growing up in DC and while at BSU. I thrived.

I would later draw upon the models of resilience I employed during my six years in MUSD, when I became Principal of Desert Mirage High School in the Coachella Valley Unified School District (CVUSD). While I was not the “lonely only” as it related to site administrators, I was part of the extreme minority in a

99% Hispanic district. Despite my personal story which I shared regularly, I was challenged on my ability to empathize and understand the societal, legal and cultural roadblocks my students and their families experienced. Once again, I was an outsider, and had to draw upon my own resilience to gain acceptance before I could begin to advocate for my students.

Throughout this study the overarching question informing my research, is how do schools support students of color to remain resilient and persistent, leading to high school completion? The little courageous voice mentioned in the opening quote is an important aspect of resilience, and persistence, and developing this “voice” should be a primary focus within our schools, so far as students of color are concerned.

Summary

The objective of this study was to examine how schools foster student resilience through the lens of persistence. A school climate centered on the study of success helps adolescents thrive in a manner that seeks to avoid learned helplessness, and promotes the development of resiliency.

The setting for this study was a culturally diverse inner-city high school. The study and data collection was conducted through the second semester of the 2016-2017 school year, with completion in early June 2017. A maximum variation sampling was being employed to cut across a range of variations such as ethnicity and socioeconomic groupings, risk to academic resilience while

maintaining the ability to identify patterns of persistence across these variations of selected participants. Data collection for this study was derived from interviewing participants utilizing a semi-structured interview methodology.

Data analysis consisted of qualitative components, obtained using a modification of Creswell's multiple interview triangulation model (2013).

Transcripts of interviews were shared with each participant to facilitate member checking to review for accuracy and to provide opportunity to review, edit or strike their responses. Member checking was facilitated by the proxy interviewers. The positionality of the primary researcher, having experienced being both an insider and outsider, aided in the identification of themes, patterns of resiliency, persistence, and the influence schools have on its development. In chapter four, the data results will be shared.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day, that says I’ll try again tomorrow.” Mary Anne Radmacher. (n.d.).

It is this same courage to try again and again that drives many of our students of color to strive and persevere daily against countless obstacles. For those students of color who lack this resilience and persistence, it is incumbent upon schools to help develop these characteristics. As a high school administrator for the past fourteen years, I have often considered the question, what factors contribute to some high school students having success, completing high school and then matriculating to post-secondary education, whereas others become distracted or derailed?

The purpose of this study was to examine and expand our understanding of the role that high schools play in influencing student resilience using the lens of persistence. Given the various societal barriers specific to students of color, the overarching question was how do *high schools support students of color to remain resilient through persistence leading to high school completion?* This study sought to expand upon the extant literature and highlight school climate and culture that promoted a collective focus on the study of student success and protective factors, such as, school belonging, the role of teacher-student, and counselor relationships. All were deemed pivotal to the development of resiliency and persistence in students of color, and supported by participants’ responses.

Using qualitative methodology with an emphasis on phenomenology, semi-structured interviews were given to 26 current 11th – grade high school students of color, at an urban high school in Southern California. The stated research design indicated 40 participants, however, due to recruitment difficulties only 26 were obtained. Participants were assigned numbers, by the proxy recruiter, to maintain confidentiality during the data collection phase of this study, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in the dissemination of the research, followed by brackets (), indicating their assigned risk strata.

A maximum variation sample with cross-stratification that included; high risk factors/high academic resiliency (H/H), high risk factors/low academic resiliency (H/L), low risk factors/high academic resiliency (L/H), and low risk factors/low academic resiliency (L/L) students was obtained. The stated cross-stratification of the research sample was maintained with the following breakdown; 7 H/H, 7 H/L, 9 L/H, 3 L/L. The gender breakdown was 10 male and 16 female. The racial breakdown of all participants revealed; 9 African/American, 12 Hispanic/Latino, 2 Asian/Pacific Islander, 2 Other and 1 Dual Race.

The Mary Anne Radmacher quote listed at the beginning of this chapter, was posed to all participants at the beginning and the end of their respective interview session. The purpose in using the quote to begin the interview session, was to get the participant thinking how this statement relates to their lived experiences, and how it relates to persistence. The purpose in reiterating the quote to close the interview session, was to gauge if there had been a shift in

meaning through the interview process for the participants through the lens of persistence. For 92% or 24 of 26 participants, there was a shift in the meaning of the quote.

Three categories; family support and expressed high academic expectations, perceptions of school and relationships, student experiences with success and challenges facilitated data collection. These categories also aligned with the research questions that informed this study.

1. *How do 11th - grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted by remaining in school when they encountered various barriers?*
2. *How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience through the lens of persistence from the perspective of 11th - grade students of color?*
3. *Despite high levels of risk, how do 11th - grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically when they encountered various barriers?*

Family Support and Expressed Academic Expectations

Family Support and Expressed Academic Expectations were the first category to inform the data. 25 participants acknowledged having strong family support, offering a protective umbrella that shielded them from distractions or deterring factors. The category of family support and expressed academic expectations cut across all strata, addresses research question one, and relates

to familial protective factors that counter distal and proximal risk factors. As it relates to the development of academic resilience and persistence, familial protective factors influenced the development of social resilience. Social resilience determines high levels of functional competency in the face of sustained and intense social and familial stressors (Griffin & Allen, 2006; Meyers & Taylor, 1998; Reyes & Elias, 2011). Participant responses under this category, and the themes that emerged from the data align with the first research question (see below). The three themes under this category were; instability and community safety, academic expectations, and sibling closeness.

1. How do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically when they encountered various barriers?

While the majority of participants indicated incidences of strong family support and stated academic expectations, this same group expressed evolving issues of instability and, community safety. Sibling closeness emerged as the first theme revealed the complexity of family make-up, and the resulting complications with sibling relationships.

Instability and Community Safety

Intersecting factors that contributed to the development of social resilience fell into two domains: distal and proximal. Distal risk factors occurred in the social context, whereas proximal risk factors related to the familial or parental context (Meyers and Taylor, 1998). Well-observed distal risk factors included the

following: substandard housing, drug trafficking, excess community violence, and culture which can be either magnified or mitigated by the extent of proximal risk factors in conjunction with protective factors.

Butch (H/H) related the necessity of his family moving frequently and the need for his siblings to adjust quickly to new circumstances.

Most of the time we felt safe but we kept moving due to rent issues

I felt safe but like at the same time 'cause you know, we kept moving

around and everything so I had to like get- I had to adapt to like

everywhere. (Butch, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Edna (L/H) shared a similar story of frequent moving, with the family often returning to a particular house and neighborhood.

We move, move around but it – we would always come back to one house

and in that neighborhood we knew everybody, would grow up with

everybody. Yes, because the neighborhood is basically like family.

(Edna, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Lisa (L/L) spoke of frequent moving that has currently led her family to experience a period of homelessness. A homeless person is an individual without permanent housing who may live on the streets; stay in a shelter, mission, single room occupancy facilities, abandoned building or vehicle; or in any other unstable or non-permanent situation. [Section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C., 254b)] (U.S. Department of Health and Humans Services, 2009).

It's, like, now we're going through a situation because we just lost our house so, right now, we've been living in Motel 6. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Jeffrey (H/H) and Michelle (H/H) shared accounts that reflected high degrees of social and emotional resilience, evidenced by their comments which present positive outlooks on life in spite of their lived experiences. Jeffrey attended boarding school in India, while Michelle grew up in the foster care system requiring her to move from New York to California. Jeffrey talked about his experiences in boarding school, but declined to reveal what brought him to California for high school.

...And childhood was pretty—how do you say—faster because I was in the boarding school—boarding school in India, and it was like staying away from parents and getting a better education. (Jeffrey, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Michelle was placed in foster care at an early age due to undisclosed issues involving her stepfather. While living in New York, Michelle was moved among multiple families, including the death of one providing foster parent. In 2009 Michelle was adopted and moved to California. Through all the placement and movement, one family in New York helped to instill a strong sense of self-efficacy.

Well, once again, because I said I'm in foster care, I have, like, several families, including the one I got adopted to legally...When I was with

that family in New York they were very productive and proactive in my educational lifestyle. They wanted to see me graduate same as the family that I'm living with out here. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Michelle voiced strong insight and self-efficacy in her statement,

You know, statistics say that usually kids that are in foster care either drop out or end up getting pregnant, so statistics say. I personally felt that I don't want to be part of that statistic. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Family support manifested itself across all participants and strata, often provided by close supervision and an expression of core values; such as honesty, being an upstanding citizen, and being respectful in nature. This family support combined with the expressed familial nature of their neighborhoods contributed to the overwhelming sense of safe and supportive communities expressed by the majority of participants. The stated family support provided them with tools to navigate their respective communities, circumstances of living and instability, and instances of crime and violence. It can be inferred that their strict and focused upbringings provided for the underpinnings for the establishment of a resilient personality and perspective on life, and permitted students to surmount academic and personal challenges.

Overall, participants expressed a sense of safety and community due to neighborhood and family support. Community safety did emerge as an evolving issue, with several participants referring to positive changes, while others painted

a more dire perspective. Media perception of their neighborhoods, and community overall presented a strong desire by participants to avoid stereotype threat. Stanley (H/L), and Janet (H/L) provided perspectives about the evolving safety of their community. Gail (L/H), and Patricia (H/L), referenced familial support to mitigate and enhance their sense of safety and well-being.

Stanley went back to his elementary years to establish a comparison,

This changed since I first started growing up, at first when I was in elementary there would be like violence around my neighborhood but little by little, they started changing. (Stanley, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

At the beginning, I would say no, but towards like when I started growing up, I would say I got safer—I felt safe living in that area. (Stanley, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Janet provided her insight,

At first no, 'cause there's a lot of gang—a lot of gang—gangs and so there was a lot of police that's coming by my house so at first, no. But then, later on, it got quieter and better and no more gang activity. (Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Gail talked of the challenge moving from one neighborhood to another,

I wasn't from Congress Heights. I actually grew up in Anacostia so there was equally a bit maybe like the environment wasn't so health—like it was dangerous, I suppose. But my parents always kept me safe. (Gail, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Patricia further discussed the impact of familial support,

So I feel like it's always going to be dangerous but I always had somebody there to be with me so safe at the same time. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Pamela (L/H) and Charles (L/H) shared insights that revealed increased danger associated with the teenaged years.

Pamela shared her perspective related to age,

But once you get older, like teenage years, it gets more dangerous because gang-related, and you were very tempted to all the things around. Like the environment isn't so safe as you get older. (Pamela, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Charles related the following,

No, I didn't feel safe in my neighborhood. I grew up in a neighborhood with a lot of crack heads and junkies and just people who didn't have their life in the right place. (Charles, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Academic Expectations

Consistent across all strata was the stated expectation, by parents, of each participant completing high school. The participants themselves, shared this expectation, with many citing the spoken and unspoken pressure of being the first in their family to graduate from high school.

Parental education levels across three of the strata employed in this study, particularly across the two high risk stratum, reflected an emphasis on students graduating from high school. This is in direct relation to the high incidence of non-

high school completion in these two strata. While spoken aspirations of college attendance was voiced across all strata, participants in the high risk strata related informational barriers that made navigating the college application process daunting. As our global society increasingly moves towards information and technological based economies, those without a post-secondary education will become further marginalized. Many students and their families understand the importance of going to college, but lack insight into the options for postsecondary study (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Joseph (L/L) discussed his parents always pushing him and trying to motivate him academically. Joseph experienced academic difficulty in middle school, which in turn may have lowered his parent's expectations, as well as his own.

They always want me to be successful. They always try to motivate me. I didn't graduate from middle school and so they want me to at least graduate from high school. (Joseph, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Joseph goes on to say,

They expect me to get a high school diploma. They want me to but they say that to go to college, that's up to me. (Joseph, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Janet (H/L) lived with her grandmother who expected her to do well in school, but did not express any expectation towards college matriculation. Instead, the emphasis was on graduating from high school and then entering the work force.

My grandma said I don't have to go to college, I'm going to have a job.

(Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

The underlying goal with Janet and several others centered on a desire to please the minimum expectations of their parents. Self-motivation towards post-secondary education options, seemed driven by this phenomenon. Patricia (H/L), Charles (L/H) and Lisa (L/L) reflected this dynamic in their comments. The absence of parental expectation towards college matriculation, clouded any sense of self-efficacy.

Patricia stated,

Yes, they expect it 'cause my brother and sister graduated [from high school] so if they graduated then I could do it.

My parents always tell me that if I decide not to go to college that they won't like—they'll be disappointed—they won't hold me against it like—like it's my decision they feel. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Charles' response was much more succinct,

My parents don't expect me to go to college. But my thought is college is not for everyone, so if it does happen, then it happens. (Charles, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Lisa related her parent's expectations of doing better than them, while also expressing a qualified and perhaps, unrealistic desire to attend college based on her low grade point average and credit deficient status.

They expect me to do way better than what – way better than what they did. Yeah. I would say every parent expects their child to get a high school diploma. My parents in particular. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Lisa went on to say,

I'm going to college, that's for sure. And they're going to – they'll support me throughout whatever decisions I make. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

For several participants in the high risk factors strata, the impetus for graduating high school centered on a parental desire for their student "to do better than them", educationally, as well as employment. Whereas for participants in the low risk factors/high academic resilience strata, college attendance was more of an expectation, and continuance of family tradition with

only a few outliers. Michelle (H/H) who was adopted and then moved to California to be with her new family, expressed mixed emotions about pursuing college or other post-secondary education options.

My mom, she's really pushing me to either go to college or go to the Marines. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Edna (L/H), Gail (L/H), William (L/H), and Brenda (L/H) bear out college matriculation and ultimately graduation as a clearly held family expectation. Maria and Brenda, in their comments shared parental disappointment when older siblings did not fulfill the expectation of college, and the resulting pressure, real or perceived, which has now fallen onto them.

Edna stated,

It's a lot of pressure because everybody expected my sister to go to college but instead she got like pregnant and it dropped all the pressure on me. (Edna, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Brenda commented,

One graduated [from high school] last year and then the other graduated [from high school] two years ago. They – my parents expect me because I'm the youngest and I'm their – like I'm their last hope or whatever. (Brenda, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Whereas Edna and Brenda expressed a self-desire to attend college, they also related the associated pressure to attend, due to older siblings choosing a path that diverged from parental expectation. William (L/H) and Gail (L/H) spoke of no such pressure, and have very clear goals.

Gail's comment revealed a "de facto" sense with regards to her college matriculation.

My brother's in his fifth year of college at UCI Irvine. (Gail, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

William discussed his family's high expectations all throughout his K-12 education, as well as his own personal goals.

They would definitely not allow me to have a C in school so I would always have higher than like a 3.5 GPA.

They do expect me—they really do expect me to—I—I expect everyone to get a high school diploma. (William, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

William goes onto express slight doubt, largely due to the overwhelming college application process, but quickly reaffirmed that his plan is to attend college.

They do expect me to go to college and I've had some –some doubts in this year, but I know for sure I'm still going to go to college. (William, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Sibling Closeness

Sibling closeness emerged as a sub theme that revealed the complexity of family make-up, and the resulting complications with sibling relationships. These complexities and sibling relationships did not, however, emerge as significant factors that countervailed the development of social or emotional resilience. For the overwhelming majority of participants, having half-siblings, wide age gaps, or siblings that lived in other states or countries was more “matter of fact”, based upon their community and friends lived experiences. Concurrently, many expressed close relationships in spite of the above referenced challenges. Only one participant reported being an only child.

Patricia (H/L), Janet (H/L), and Lisa (L/L) all reflected a “matter of fact” tone when discussing their respective relationships with their siblings. Patricia accepted that since she was the youngest, her siblings pretty much ignored her. Janet and Lisa spoke of having partial relationships with some of their siblings as a result of their half-sibling status.

Patricia expressed,

Well, I am the youngest of three---I was always distant from them since they were like some other age and I was just the last one so they wouldn't really pay attention to me. (Pamela, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Janet voiced having a partial relationship,

I have two fully related brother. I have one—another brother that's my half and I have two half-sisters, with only two of them. (Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Lisa's comment revealed the complexity of her family make-up and the resulting relationships with her siblings.

I have five siblings. And my relationship with my siblings – well, with three of them is not the—we're not close, because we're from—it's my dad had three with his previous wife.

The oldest one is thirty something and the youngest one is eleven. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Dana (H/L), Veda (H/L), and Lonnie (H/H) all shared a similarly "matter of fact" point of view as it related to sibling relationships and closeness. Lonnie has just one sibling but still spoke of a lack of closeness, while Dana and Veda with multiple siblings expressed diminished relationships for varied reasons.

Lonnie simply stated,

I have only one sibling. Our relationship is complicated. (Lonnie, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Dana shared this perspective,

I have three siblings, all siblings do is fight. (Dana, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Veda offered this explanation,

I have six brothers, just older brothers. I'm not very close with my brothers, we all have different parents, all different moms but the same dad. (Veda, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Countering the notion that large families with multi-aged siblings, and half-sibling status equates to a lack of positive sibling relationships, Sharon (L/H), Pamela (L/H), and Brenda (L/H) revealed a different perspective. All three related positive and very caring relationships with their siblings.

Sharon indicated,

Both girls, so all girls and we were all pretty close. (Sharon, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Brenda shared,

I have two older siblings, and they're boys. And we're all close (Brenda, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Finally, Pamela who has the most siblings of this group related,

I have five siblings, and we are all close. (Pamela, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Two interesting cases involved Jeffrey, who attended boarding school in India for much of his childhood education, and Michelle who was adopted. Jeffrey indicated he had no siblings, and reflected on the loneliness that he encountered, particularly while living in a dorm at boarding school. Michelle, perhaps due to her frequent moving around associated with her foster/adopted status revealed her recent discovery of siblings, and the challenges of trying to develop relationships with them.

Jeffrey's statement was quite poignant,

I don't have any siblings. Sometimes it feels like lonely because I no one to talk all the time, or play with. (Jeffrey, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Michelle shared her surprise and struggle,

So there is eight of us that I currently found out about. About two years ago, in 2014, I found out that I had two brothers but I have eight and I'm the only girl out of the eight. I haven't recently seen them face-to-face. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Perceptions of School and Relationships

The second category to inform the data was Perception of School and Relationships. This category centered on participants' perceptions of the overall school climate, interactions and relationships with other student, faculty and staff, and supports offered by the school as it related to protective factors and school belonging, and addresses research question two. 24 participants shared their perceptions of school and the supports offered, while all 26 participants reported having established a positive and supportive relationship with at least one faculty or staff member. As it relates to the role of schools, the development of a supportive in-school network has been shown to have a powerful influence on high school completion, a sense of self-efficacy and the development of emotional and academic resiliency. Rodriguez (2007) states a major focus of any school reform, particularly at the high school level, should center on "forging a deliberate culture of success for low income Black, and Latina or Latino students" (p. 1). Participant responses under this category and the themes that emerged from the data, align with the second research question (see below).

The three themes under this category were; school, impressions, and relationships.

2. *How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience through the lens of persistence from the perspective of 11th-grade students of color?*

For students of color from historically and substantively under-represented groups, particularly first-generation and low-income students, the aspiration for a college education is often met with information barriers that make navigating the college application process daunting. For these groups the importance of positive and supportive relationships with teachers, counselors and staff assumed greater significance, as many of these students were not able to rely on parents or family members to help guide or inform their decision making process (Holland, 2015, McDonough & Calderone, 2006, Hooker & Brand, 2010).

The themes of Impressions and Relationships emerged to examine the influence of, sense of self, as expressed by participants, combined with an internal locus of control. These two constructs related to recognizing positive feedback/criticism and the ability to form supportive relationships with faculty and staff. The presence of a strong sense of self, combined with internal locus of control provided the intentionality or personal regard for extending oneself for others beyond what is formally required (Holland, 2015). This intentionality in turn related to self-efficacy, and aspiration building that manifests as emotional resilience and persistence.

School

The expressed perception of school as being a worthwhile and positive experience was the commonly voiced opinion to emerge, with only one participant questioning the objectiveness of “the system”. Felice (2014) states; as long as a minority student perceives the educational exchange relationship to be

efficacious (either in terms of immediate or future benefits over current costs) he/she will continue to remain in school. Internal locus of control surfaced as several participants recognized the need to make changes to their work and study habits in order to be successful. The level and quantity of work associated with high school, when compared to middle school, contributed to participants sharing feelings about deadlines and related stress. Still others expressed relief, when compared to the scary high school stories they heard, as they left middle school. Relief, that high school has not turned out to be as scary and foreboding as anticipated.

Stanley (H/L) viewed high school as an inevitable phase of life, something you have to deal with and make the best of the situation. While Sharon (L/H) and Lonnie (H/H) voiced more decidedly upbeat perspective of high school, with Lonnie being effusive about her love of school in general. Charles (L/H) revealed a sense of self and internal locus of control, as he discusses the transformation of his overall view towards school.

Stanley expressed,

High school for me is just another part of your life where you get to learn new stuff, a new, basically an adventure. (Stanley, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Stanley's statement stands in marked contrast to the views voiced by Sharon and Lonnie.

Sharon described her school experiences,

It's challenging but at the same time like it's really fun.

I feel like they challenge my ability.

It's fun because like how do I say? Like you know, the activities we have in school and just being with friends and, you know, the teachers are also very friendly. (Sharon, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Lonnie was even more direct in her statement,

I just love school, period. I don't know. People call me weird. I just love school. (Lonnie, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Charles' related a shift in attitude towards school, and his taking ownership of his educational outcome.

There was a point in time where I – well, I pushed school away, but now I see their... I feel that high school is a very, really, really important part of your life. You have to get things done on your own. (Charles, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

The angst and uncertainty during the teenage high school years, surfaced in the responses of several participants. The recognition of the importance of high school towards future goals, the pressure to stay on track towards graduation, and the associated stress of assignments and deadlines materialized as manifestations of angst and uncertainty. For participants Patricia (H/L), Gail

(L/H) and Lisa (L/L) their internal locus of control emerged, as they like Charles, took ownership and acknowledged areas for improvement. Sissy (H/L) and Edna (L/H) spoke of the stress, real or perceived in staying on track towards graduation.

Patricia and Gail, respectively, related their evolving perspectives towards the importance of high school.

I feel like high school it's kind of—how do I explain it? It's only good if you make it good. Because if you decide to slack off and you're just far behind, then you're not going to enjoy it because you – you're going to be struggling and trying to keep up.

So I feel like I probably thought of high school as not serious, but now I know that it is serious. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Gail expounded on Patricia's statement by adding,

It's—it's a big step. I'm enjoying it so far. I—there's a few areas I can work in like I can work out more by like if I self-discipline myself. It's a bit tough sometimes, especially as a junior and taking my next steps towards my senior year. (Gail, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Lisa, in her comments, reflected the challenge of transitioning to high school to middle school for many students, juxtaposed against her awakening to the importance of high school.

I thought it was just a game until my counselor started talking to me and talking to me.

Well, when I got here, I was just happy to come to high school, and now, it's just, I'm ready to get out, because I want to start working. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

The expressions of stress related to increased workloads, and teacher expectations is a common phenomenon associated with high school.

Participants, Sissy (H/L), Edna (L/H), Richard ((L/H), Janet (H/L) expressed the degree to which they adapted in a positive manner to high school expectations. Joseph (L/L), conversely expressed his disappointment with “the system” and ultimately his succumbing to the pressures, expectations, and perceived unfairness.

Sissy and Edna, respectively, shared their feelings of stress,

I feel like sometimes I get stressed out 'cause of school but it's a good experience in high school.

Like homework, like tests, like studying for tests and everything. (Sissy, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Edna presented a slightly different notion of stress,

It is stressing on so many levels. Let's say if I messed up in a class, I only have this summer to make it up and then next year. (Edna, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Richard and Janet shared feelings of relief at their actual high school experiences, compared to expectations based upon what they had been told. Richard spoke about an almost “gloom and doom” expectation, while Janet referenced the differences in teacher assistance. Joseph’s comments reflect an external locus of control, with an inevitability towards his acceptance of poor academic results.

Richard statement revealed surprise and a deep sense of relief,

I expected it like to be worse than this but it’s actually easier, it’s like I’m – I’ve gone through much smoother going through middle school, listening and hearing stuff about high school. (Richard, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Janet shared a feeling of relief, while noting the different level of assistance provided by teachers in high school, when compared to middle school.

It’s different from middle school ‘cause lot more work and like my middle school teachers would give us extra time like if we didn’t finish an assignment, they would give us extra time but high school they don’t. (Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Joseph expressed an external locus of control and a lack of aspiration that might be a more commonly held feeling among certain segments of high school populations, however, for this study, Joseph was the only participant that expressed an external locus of control perspective.

I feel that sometimes it's not worth it because it's just too much – there's a lot of teachers that don't care about the students.

I think to myself, what's the point of me waking up and coming to school if – if like it's not good, the system is not working good. (Joseph, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Impressions

The perceptions of participants related to how others in the school community viewed them personally as being academically able, and how those perceptions intersected to influence their relationships with faculty and staff. These perceptions in turn highlighted those elements of school climate that promoted a collective focus on the study of student success and offered protective factors to students such as, school belonging, and the development of teacher/counselor/student relationships. These constructs were pivotal to the development of a sense of self and an internal locus of control that manifests as self-efficacy and aspiration building. (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1997; McMillian & Reed, 1994; Geary, 1988) point to advocacy and aspiration building as presenting crucial roles in developing persistence, and highlight the role of schools in developing this advocacy and aspiration building.

The majority of participants expressed the belief that faculty, staff and other students viewed them in a positive manner, which in turn facilitated the development of relationships with certain teachers and counselors. A mixed interpretation as it related to perceived negative impressions/criticisms also

surfaced, with sentiments ranging from complete disregard of the criticism, to acceptance if the criticism offered a potential positive outcome or improvement, or if the criticism came from someone they trusted or respected. This connects to the power of positive student-teacher relationships, in that if there is a positive bond or relationship, the student is more likely to receive the message. These varied responses to negative criticism ran consistent with the high school teenage years. As students navigated through high school, the constructs of emotional resilience, internal locus of control and persistence often clouded for emerging young adults, when to acknowledge perceived negative criticism and when to reject it outright.

Stanley (H/L), Butch (H/H), and Edna (L/H) revealed what they believed were positively held impressions of them by faculty and staff. These positive impressions served to facilitate the establishment supportive relationships, and for two participants, provided the motivating factor to continue to achieve academically. Stanley acknowledged that his academic ethic fluctuated, which impacted the overall perception of others towards him as a student. Overall, Stanley voiced an opinion that he felt largely supported. Butch and Edna discussed the positively held impressions of them by faculty and staff, while also expounding on how they related to negative impressions/criticism.

Stanley shared this view,

They view me as basically a student that goes both ways. Sometimes lazy, sometimes works for – a hard-working student, so basically it's just

like a balance in between last and hard working. (Stanley, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Butch and Edna, respectively, reflected on impressions and negative criticism,

Some of them view me outstanding, overachieving, and some view me as just the average guy.

Well, if they're positive, yeah. If they're negative, just take them out. (Butch, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Edna echoed Butch's sentiments,

Like hard working, always on my – what I have to do and well, I'm late sometimes, I'm absent, but even though I'm absent, I still so what I have to do. (Edna, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Edna offered this additional insight regarding negative criticism,

I think it's a line when people say like oh, opinions don't matter, whatever, but they still affect you in some way so I'd say yes.

More negatively than positively. (Edna, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Patricia (H/L), Gwen (H/H), and Michelle (H/H) expressed a mixed interpretation or acceptance of negative impressions/criticism. Patricia and Michelle voiced internal locus of control in their refusal to allow others to dictate

their aspirations. Gwen established that prior relationship or the lack thereof, determined the weight she assigned to negative criticism.

Patricia and Michelle, respectively shared their views,

I'm really close to my counselor so I'm pretty sure she views me as a good person and I try to—I try my best to be nice to everyone around me 'cause, you know, I want respect myself.

And if people think like I can't do it, well, obviously, I know I could do it and other peoples' opinion is nothing to me. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Michelle expressed a similar sentiment,

I've been told by a lot of my teachers and students that I'm very quiet. I like to stay to myself. So I've gotten that a lot, that, I'm very shy, kind of antisocial, but not that much. I mean, if I know you I'm not going to be quiet.

To be honest, their opinion doesn't really matter to me because I'm my own being and they're their own being. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Gwen qualified her receptiveness based on the existence of a prior relationship,

I feel like some teachers like if they know me, their opinions do matter, but like if they don't or never had me as a student, I don't think it matters to me. (Gwen, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Pamela (L/H) and Lonnie (H/H) related competing views with regards to acknowledging the opinions or criticism of others, while simultaneously expressing what they believed are positive impressions held by faculty and staff.

Pamela stated,

Other people, look at me as a leader because I'm one of the oldest in my - of my siblings, and just the way I portray my actions, I—I show like leadership skills.

And their opinions do matter because what they think of me could affect other's opinions, too. (Pamela, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Lonnie qualified her acceptance of criticism,

Educationally determined, kind of I lack a little bit, but I know how to do my my work. Positive all the time.

If it's negative opinions where it could help me, yes, but if it's just negative just to be negative, no. And if it's positive, I'm just going to keep on doing me. (Lonnie, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Charles (L/H) offered a perspective on acknowledging criticism from others that reflected self-efficacy intersected with learned life lessons. Charles indicated having a positive relationship with faculty and staff, while simultaneously revealing a stubbornness often associated with high school teen-aged students.

I think my peers, the students, the teachers, the staff, I think they look at me as a very intellectual person, because the things that I do are really helpful.

Nobody's opinions really affect me, not even my parents or siblings, because I know that there was a time when I did make bad mistakes, and they did tell me, don't do this or do that, but I had to learn for my own self.

(Charles, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Relationships

All participants reported establishing positive relationships with at least one faculty, staff or administrator on campus, while many reported multiple positive relationships. Nelson et al., (2012), in their meta-analysis of the role of schools in developing resilience in students, highlight the importance of student-teacher relationships that facilitate mentoring. While participants' related positive relationships with various teachers and campus security, the most frequently mentioned relationship was with their counselor. The frequent mentioning of counselors points to the unique role of counselors on a high school campus as advocate, aspiration builder, and college knowledge provider. Another aspect of student-counselor relationships highlighted the inherent non-judgmental nature of

the counselor's role on campus, meaning that counselors do not issue letter grades that determined a pass or fail of a particular course. This lack of perceived judgement facilitated the establishment of trusting relationships easier.

Stanley (H/L), Pamela (L/H), Richard (L/H), William (L/H) and Johnny (L/L) all expressed having positive and supportive relationships with at least one teacher on campus. Stanley and Pamela shared unqualified recounts of their relationships with teachers. Richard offers a qualified example of positive teacher relationships. Ricardo, and Johnny altogether discounted the establishment of positive teacher relationships, while simultaneously praising the support of his counselor.

Stanley offered his perspective,

But mostly they view me as a good student in class, but I have a good relationship with my teachers and my counselor but most of my teachers they view me as a good working student in class. (Stanley, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Pamela presented her view,

A lot of my teachers, we have nice bonds. It has made me more confident in coming to school 'cause I know that they'll be able to help me. (Pamela, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Pamela went onto express her relationship with her counselor,

I know one of them for sure would be my counselor. She—they really push for us to do better and is continuously giving us—what are those things?-- college papers and keeping us up-to-date. (Pamela, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

The views shared by Richard, William, and Bill provided a slightly qualified to dismissive point of view as it related to the establishment of positive student-teacher relationships. Richard stated the following,

My teachers help me through what I had to do throughout the year
Usually, sometimes when you need a like you need to during lunch
sometimes a teachers would like help—they'll allow you to be in their
classroom and they'll help you out extra lessons and such. (Richard,
personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Richard offered this view with regards to the counselors on campus,

So like the counselors in school they really do help me. Like if I have an
issue with something, like with classes or anything, I can talk to them
easily, we resolve it and it just helps me. (Richard, personal
communication, May 10, 2017).

William stated,

Teachers don't really have a – my teachers don't really have a connection with students, but there are some teachers that do recognize me and acknowledge my existence when it comes to the outside world.

Counselors—they surprisingly do like me. They enjoy me how I come off and check on my grade and progress and teachers. Miss Crewe, my counselor, has been helping me out when it comes to getting my grades higher and opportunities for college. (William, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Bill acknowledged having a positive relationship, but also expressed a desire for improved teacher-student interaction,

It's good, but it could be better

I want the teachers to interact with the students more. (Bill, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

An emerging component of the strength of student-counselor relationships is trust, authenticity, and the length of the relationship itself. Whereas, a student may only have a teacher for one particular course, their counselor remained with them throughout their high school career. This permitted the establishment of deep trust, and insight into the student beyond the classroom or school. In *Trust Matters* Tschannen-Moran (2014) discusses the five facets of trust; benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability, and competence

required to establish effective school leadership. These same five facets of trust are the crucial underpinnings of establishing caring and effective student-teacher, and student counselor relationships. Holland (2015) states that “Trust functions as both a bridge and a barrier to social capital” (p. 245). An effective trusting relationship enhances the bridge effect and minimizes the barrier effect. Authenticity of relationships often translated to personalization of relationships, and was measured by immediate and frequent contact. This is significant when students are faced with serious personal challenges that often have nothing to do with school (Rodriguez, 2007).

These sentiments are shared by Sissy (H/L), Sharon (L/H), Veda (H/L), Lisa (L/L), and Alice (H/H). Alice, Sissy and Sharon revealed the length of their respective relationships, and the ease of which they are able to discuss virtually anything. Veda and Lisa expressed a “daughter-mother” relationship with their respective counselor. Pseudonyms are being used for the actual names of the counselors discussed.

Alice related,

My counselor, she has followed my roadway since freshman year. She has given me support.

She has encouraged me to change. I was really different in freshman year, and now I’m a different person because of my counselor. (Alice, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Sissy and Sharon respectively, shared similar views,

Well my counselor is always like helping me out too like she's like always-- sometimes she calls me out or something. She tells me like to keep up with my grades. (Sissy, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Sharon was more direct in her statement,

My counselor, she's always there, you could say. Doesn't matter what it is. (Sharon, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Veda and Lisa regarded their respective counselors as "mother" figures. Veda said this about her counselor,

Mrs. Pope. She knows a lot about me. She knows, like, my outside – like, I dance and stuff, so she knows about that. Like a mother figure. (Veda, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Lisa had similar comments regarding her counselor,

Mrs. Harewood. I can go to her and talk to her about anything and she'll help me through the situation. Like a mother almost. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Student Experiences with Success and Challenges

This final category examined the participants' experiences with success in any arena, and their ability to transfer that success and those learned skills to another arena. The role that schools played in developing that ability to transfer success and learned skills is included in this examination. A school climate centered on the study of success helps adolescents thrive in a manner that seeks to avoid learned helplessness. Through the identification of characteristics, factors and mechanisms that facilitate high risk students to be successful, schools can apply this knowledge to create climates, designed to help counter risk factors (Nelson et al., 2012). Luthar (1991) asserts that learned helplessness is avoided through an internal locus of control and the belief that events and outcomes are controllable. Students demonstrating internal locus of control willfully drew upon past experiences in which they overcame an obstacle or challenge, as a reference for overcoming a current challenge. The themes of success and challenges focused on participants' ability to demonstrate resilience and persistence when overcoming barriers to success, and the influence that family, school or personal traits were manifest. Participant responses under this category and themes, align with research questions numbers one and two, and connect the results. The two themes under this category were; success and challenges.

1. *How do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically when they encountered various barriers?*

2. *How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience through the lens of persistence from the perspective of 11th-grade students of color?*

Success

Patricia (H/L), Janet (H/L), Richard (L/H), and Gail (L/H) all discussed various school supports that influenced their academic success and resilience. Patricia talked about the collaboration that brought two full-time USC college advisors to the campus of her high school. Janet mentioned her relationship with her counselor, and surprisingly referred to the daily morning announcements. Gail discussed the impact of the various academic clubs, and how they promoted an increased academic ethic. Richard beamed about the school's library and the various services offered there.

Patricia shared,

I've heard it's other high schools don't have like you guys, like college mentors-- they don't have the help we have so I feel like—like with the help here that we're getting, it could help a lot like for the future. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Janet highlighted the impact of her relationship with her counselor,

I didn't care about my grades were like until my counselor came and said that if we don't our classes, we can't graduate. It's not like middle school where you can get all Fs you graduate. So in tenth grade, I started

bettering my grades. I started going to tutoring and then once I saw what my grades were—I was happy. (Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Janet also expressed how the morning announcements impacted her,

Just like when announcements come on they give you like a little pep talk or whatever. (Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Gail spoke about her membership in various academic clubs,

As a point of clarity the clubs that Gail mentioned; Junior Statesmen of America (JSA), and Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) focus on civic engagement and awareness, and math, engineering and science related fields, respectively.

I want to say that like clubs like maybe—maybe JSA and MESA. MESA – I was in MESA in tenth grade for a little while and it really helped me understand math and science better. (Gail, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Gail revealed an academic ethic as a result of her involvement in MESA,

I did a presentation for my Physics final and I did really well and I felt like – I felt proud of myself because I knew that I did my best and I did well. (Gail, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Richard discussed the impact of library services and their influence on his academic success,

I have like issue with math so tutoring and the library really, really helps me I can't really learn much beside the book, which is still pretty confusing, so having someone help you after school, having those resources there and for free too – so that really does help. (Richard, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Richard went onto say,

And the library—I don't have a personal printer at home so whenever any print assignments, which I cannot email, I go to the library and they actually provide the paper and ink.(Richard, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

William (L/H), Jeffrey (H/H), Michelle (H/H) and Gwen H/H), all related how they were able to apply success in one arena, and then translate that success to academic success. Jeffrey, who attended boarding school in India, discussed an athletic accomplishment he garnered while in India, and how he applied that skill to boost his academic resilience when faced with a challenging course. William spoke of his applying to take a course at the local community college and the doubt expressed by the college representative.

Michelle, who was adopted shared the embarrassment of being removed from one class, being placed in a lower class, and the resulting triumph and its influence on her academic resilience and persistence. Gwen revealed her

euphoric feeling of doing well on a group project, and how that success motivated her continued success.

William related,

I did something was when I went to Greenidge to apply to take a test so I can apply for a class, film analysis, and I got successful—I was successful because of once printed out my scores the Greenidge representative was surprised of how I passed the college—college English test and with – with a very passing score, like a high passing score. (William, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Jeffrey shared his accomplishments,

At sports, it was table tennis. I worked hard for more like few years, like six years every day, 45 minutes for practice. It helped me for getting champion at Indian – like national champion for India.

For academic, I worked hard for my Spanish class because it's new to me, and—and I got good grade for all my first semester. And going into second semester. (Jeffrey, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Michelle recounted her embarrassment, and the resulting influence this incident had on her developing resilience and persistence,

I think the one time where I worked really, really hard and I was successful was probably last year, my tenth grade year where I got placed in Algebra

One, I think, because the Algebra Two teacher thought I wasn't fully prepared yet for the class. So she had me sent back to Algebra One.

I felt really accomplished that I had—that the teacher who had put me in there showed me that just because I don't get it doesn't mean that I'm not smart enough. It's just that I need extra help. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Michelle went onto discuss her predisposition towards attending college,

So usually they say when kids move schools a lot they tend to lose a lot of knowledge because they're moving around and they're not stable.

I'm going to get into college that I want or whether I'm just going to have to go with the bare minimum of what I have.

It doesn't matter if I'm that 1% or 20% that actually proves the statistics wrong. Like, I got a pre-acceptance letter to King Drew University Medical School. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Gwen's comments while more succinct, still revealed the impact of success in one arena and the translation of that success to other arenas,

I think it was a poem. And I was working it—I was working hard on it and at the end of the day, I felt good like we did good 'cause the group won.

Feels – felt great. Felt like I could do anything I wanted to like put my mind onto it. (Gwen, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Richard (L/H), and Sissy (H/L) provided additional examples of the influence of success in one arena, combined with school protective factors, and the transference of that success to other arenas. Richard related how a teacher helped him improve his time management skills. Sissy discussed the impact of just one positive teacher-student relationship. Sharon (L/H) shared her sense of accomplishment when she applied for an internship, and despite her self-doubting, successfully was accepted.

Richard revealed,

At the time I really didn't know how to manage my—my work effort, workload so overcoming that was just like using my teachers while they helped me through it. (Richard, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Sissy expounded upon Richard's comment,

She helped me with extra credit, she helped me retake tests—that's actually what I did when I was in high school. I was really bad at math and I did the exact same thing.

I would stay after school, I would retake like every quiz, every classroom assignment or every like homework I would redo all of it to get my grade back up. (Sissy, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Sharon related her overcoming self-doubt,

The first time I applied for an internship—that made me, you know, I was really nervous about it. I wasn't sure if I was going to get accepted or not, you know. I felt like the competition, you could say, was like—better than me, I got in and, yeah, I felt like that was a very good accomplishment that I had done. (Sharon, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Challenges

This sub theme casts focus on the various challenges and hindrances to academic success participants had experienced, across social, emotional, and academic domains, and the evidence of resilience and persistence manifested to overcome these challenges. Concurrent to the examination of resilience and persistence displayed, the influence of personality traits, familial and school protective factors were also considered. Across all participants the effect of personality traits emerged as the most frequently cited factor contributing to the challenges and hindrances to academic success. Martin (2002) identifies three personality typologies: the success-oriented student, the failure-avoidant student, and the failure-accepting student. Success-oriented students tend to reflect optimism, while adopting a proactive and positive orientation towards their studies and are not easily debilitated by setbacks. Failure-avoidant students tend to be anxious, live in self-doubt, and are motivated by a fear of failure perpetuated by the uncertainty regarding their ability to avoid failure or achieve success (Alpert & Haber, 1960; Covington & Omleich, 1991). Failure-accepting

students, often referred to as having the trait of learned helplessness, have reached a point of acceptance of the inevitability of failure, and no longer strive to avoid failure (Martin, 2002).

The influence of familial and school protective factors, against distal and proximal risk factors were revealed to be of significance, with familial factors emerging as the second most frequently cited factor contributing to the challenges to academic success. Adolescents who experience challenging circumstances often come from home environments where behavior is reinforced through violence and domination, rather than rules and incentives (Gillock & Reyes, 1999; Meyers & Taylor, 1998; Reyes & Elias, 2011; Wright, 2013). For adolescents to learn a language other than fear and intimidation, educators must consistently distinguish between rules and discipline, with expectations and rules frequently revisited in a non-punitive manner that expresses great expectations.

Butch (H/H), Brenda (L/H), Veda (H/L), David (L/H), and William (L/H) all expressed personality traits often associated with the growth and maturity that occurs during the teenage years. While benign on the surface, these traits, left unfettered could emerge to significantly inhibit academic success.

Butch was very clear with his comment,

It's probably the laziness that gets into you. (Butch, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Brenda offered her perspective,

Deadlines. I procrastinate a lot. (Brenda, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Veda was even more succinct,

(As a point of clarity, the phenomenon referred to as “senioritis”, when graduating seniors lose interest in high school academic efforts as graduation draws near, has been shown to occasionally occur in underclassmen.)

Senioritis. My grades (Veda, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

David simply stated,

When I don’t do the work. (David, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

William pointed out,

Absences have hindered my – my success in high school so if –I try to avoid. (William, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Michelle (H/H), Patricia (H/L), and Charles (L/H) provided insight that was more substantive in nature when discussing their respective personality traits that hindered their academic success. Michelle shared her initial feelings about being forced to move to California. Patricia’s comments echoed sentiments expressed by Michelle, and reflected personal growth. Charles discussed his awakening, and the importance of accepting support from others.

Michelle provided very astute insight,

I didn't like it out here. Like, I was very bitter about the fact that I was out here because I didn't know anyone, I didn't have any friends, and so I was, like, what's the point of being out here. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Michelle went onto say,

I've just learned to adapt to my surroundings and just be grateful for what I have because some people might not have the opportunity that I had to come out here. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Patricia revealed,

Well, at first it was really bad because for a time people would tell me that I became really reckless and rebellious but it was because I felt really lonely and I learned that it's not okay to let your anger out because you do hurt people and what I did was I learned how to communicate. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Patricia also shared,

I feel like I learned my lesson because my freshman year I messed up and I couldn't join like—like programs I wanted to.

Well, I don't think it's much high school but I think it's myself because sometimes I slack off and I procrastinate. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Charles related his journey,

It took a toll on me, staying out late, doing things with people I shouldn't do
If I do make a decision and its right or wrong, then will have to just live
with the consequence. (Charles, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Charles continued,

I'll try to fight the battle myself, but, as I grow up, I notice that it's not
always me that can fight the battle. I'm either going to need someone to
help me, or I need to let that battle—like, I need to let that battle go.
(Charles, personal communication, May 11, 2017).

Familial challenges and hindrance surfaced in the comments made by
Richard (L/H), Stanley (H/L), and Patricia (H/L) that reflected challenges and
hindrance unique to participants from first generation immigrant families, and the
resulting influence of acculturation on that process. Richard shared the challenge
that being undocumented presents. Stanley explained the language barrier, while
Patricia revealed the impact of families separated by international borders.
Joseph (L/L) spoke of the familial challenge that occurs when losing someone
close to you.

Richard related his challenges have all been familial based,

I don't think any factors in high school have done that do far unless like
personal like—like documents.

Like legal documents. (Richard, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Stanley shared his perspective,

Some challenges for me where since I wasn't born here in the US, my first challenge back then was learning to speak English, to learn the language and basically the opportunities that I had or that my parents presented me were they would take me to tutoring classes to learn English. (Stanley, personal communication, May 16, 2017).

Patricia revealed the challenge to family when separated by international borders,

Probably building a relationship with like my family because my mom left to Mexico about a year ago, so we were all against each other. Like we would fight any – like find any excuse to fight. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Patricia continued with,

I learned not to take people for granted and how to appreciate people. (Patricia, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

Joseph talked about loss, in a manner that most can relate to,

A difficult time for me was when a family member of mine passed away. He was really close to me. He was the one who always wanted me to be successful in school. And when he passed away, I felt like I had nobody

to motivate me or anything, to check on me. (Joseph, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Dana (H/L) and Lisa (L/L) related concerns and challenges prevalent in underrepresented communities, and the associated lack of resources and opportunities. Dana, shared the challenge of remaining focused academically, while dealing with competing familial crises. Lisa revealed how the effects of housing and employment instability, impacted her ability to maintain focus on academic requirements.

Dana discussed the gravity of the situation in her comment,

My—my 18 year-old brother, he's in jail right now.

Just focusing on school and family right now. (Dana, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Lisa shared the constant, though unspoken pressure,

I try hard to work and try to accomplish things and do better, so I don't have to fall into cracks like we did.

Failing classes that I don't need to be failing. (Lisa, personal communication, May 13, 2017).

Expressions of school related challenges or hindrance to academic success echoed sentiments, expressed when discussing positive relationships with faculty and staff. Joseph (L/L), and Janet (H/L) shared their observations, while Lonnie (H/H) expressed her views about underclassmen.

Joseph recounted his desire for increased positive student-teacher interaction,

Basically about the teachers not caring about the students, the grades, all the tests. (Joseph, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Janet echoed Joseph, and expressed her desire for more positive student-teacher interaction,

Sometimes there's this teacher and they're always talking like if you don't do this assignment, they make it seem like you're not going to do anything like you're just hopeless. (Janet, personal communication, May 19, 2017).

Lonnie got straight to the point,

These ninth graders. It's just terrible. Fighting, negativity for no reason, drama. (Lonnie, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

The Mary Anne Radmacher quote utilized in the interview protocol revealed a shift in meaning for 92% or 24 of the 26 participants. Initially viewed as merely a poem or wise expression, the motivational message of persistence became clearer as a result of the participants reflecting on their own experiences.

When asked to respond to the following interview question, while considering the quote, four characteristics or traits emerged as the most prevalent responses.

What characteristics or qualities would you use to describe people who have faced challenges or difficulties and overcame them?

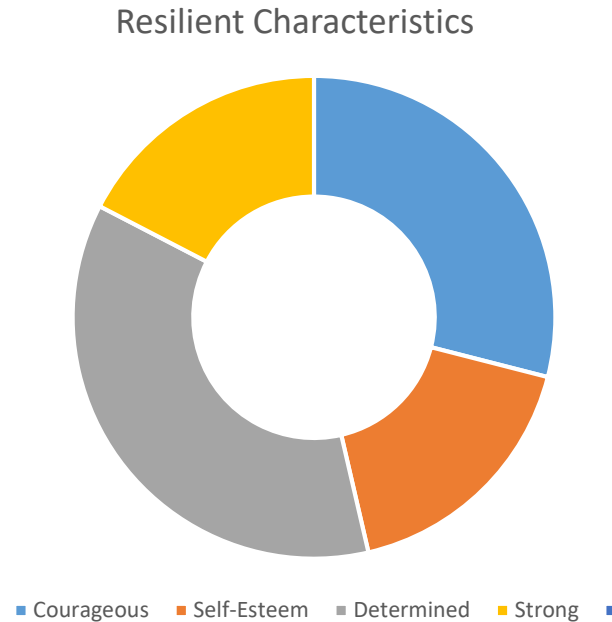


Figure 7. Resilient Characteristics

Determined at 25% and courageous at 20% surfaced as the most frequently expressed characteristics of a resilient individual. The characteristics of self-esteem/self-confidence at 12% and simply being “strong” at 12% emerged as equally expressed resilient characteristics. The adjective of being strong could be considered an alternative descriptor of determined, but as it was expressed in clear distinct terms, it was given a separate distinction.

William (L/H), Richard (L/H), Gail (L/H), and Michelle (H/H) provided their insights on remaining resilient and persistent in the face of challenges.

William shared his perspective,

I would describe them as strong willing because most people feel they get tired and like oh, well, I’m not going to do that because I don’t want to be

tired, but people who have a really strong willing will know it's necessary to keep on going. (William, personal communication, May 12, 2017).

Richard provided this insight,

Strong, courageous, of course, everybody has a little doubt so sometimes doubt is like a factor in that, but then you have to overcome it so persistence. (Richard, personal communication, May 10, 2017).

Gail discussed the influence of self-confidence,

For sure they have self-confidence in themselves as well as self-discipline because when you have discipline yourself, you can overcome anything.

(Gail, personal communication, May 12, 2017).Michelle spoke about wisdom and the power of forgiveness,

Wisdom or forgiveness. The reason I say forgiveness is because with life there comes a lot of challenges and a lot of ropes that some people put you through. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

High Risk Factor/High Academic Resilience

The objective of this study was to examine how schools, high schools in particular influenced resilience among their students of color. The participant sample utilized for this study spanned four strata of risk factors and academic

resilience. Throughout this chapter, participant phenomenological experiences were analyzed in their totality. This section examined the lived experiences of the seven participants identified as possessing high risk factors combined with high academic resilience and persistence. Participant responses in this section, align with research question three (see below). The two themes under this category were; social and emotional resilience, academic supports and sense of belonging.

3. *Despite high levels of risk, how do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically when they encountered various barriers?*

Butch, Jeffrey, Michelle, Lonnie, Gwen, Alice, and Linda through their lived experiences, identified risk factors, and evidence of academic resilience, were stratified as high risk factor and high academic resilience. Of this group only two were raised in a dual parent home, two were being raised by a grandmother or guardian, and the remaining three were raised in a single parent home. Three were identified as low socioeconomic, based on data from their high school. Given the fact that the target school has a student demographic that reflected 92% low socioeconomic, based upon federal guidelines, it is likely that more participants were misidentified based on this sole risk indicator.

Only one participant had a parent or guardian that completed college, having earned a master's degree. One participant had a parent or guardian that completed some college. The majority, four participants, lived in homes in which

parents did not complete high school. One participant, Jeffrey, had a grade point average (G.P.A.) higher than a 3.0. Jeffrey's G.P.A. was a 3.4. The remaining participants had a mean G.P.A of 2.36. Two participants were enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Refer to table 2 on page 42

Social and Emotional Resilience

The seven participants in the high risk/high academic resilience stratum manifested both resilience and persistence through a range of lived experiences, and proximal and distal risk factors that spanned instability in their home environments, living alone in boarding school, and navigating the foster care system on the east and west coasts of this country. Representative statements by Butch and Michelle reflected the overall sense of social and emotional resilience and persistence for this stratum of participants.

Michelle voiced strong insight and self-efficacy in her statement,

You know, statistics say that usually kids that are in foster care either drop out or end up getting pregnant, so statistics say. I personally felt that I don't want to be part of that statistic. (Michelle, personal communication, June 7, 2017).

Butch related the necessity of his family moving frequently and the need for his siblings to adjust quickly to new circumstances.

Most of the time we felt safe but we kept moving due to rent issues
I felt safe but like at the same time 'cause you know, we kept moving
around and everything so I had to like get- I had to adapt to like
everywhere. (Butch, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

Sibling closeness and complex familial composition emerged as another proximal risk factor, with all but one participant reporting a lack of sibling closeness. Navigating distal risk factors in the community, such as crime, violence, and negative influences emerged as a consistent characteristic of all seven participants. The following representative statements by Lonnie, reflects a *de facto* acceptance of family composition and sibling closeness, and a refusal to accept stereotype threat as a defining moniker.

Lonnie simply stated,

I have only one sibling. Our relationship is complicated. (Lonnie,
personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Lonnie went onto to state,

I feel safe in my neighborhood, I mean they say that "Any Town" is all this
and that and this. (Lonnie, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

The early development and manifestation of social and emotional resilience and persistence was attributed to familial support and the repeated expressions of high academic expectations, in spite of the low familial incidences of high school completion. The enhancement of these attributes by the target

high school in this study, along with the development of academic resilience and persistence was evidenced in the participant's overall perspectives on school supports, and supportive school relationships.

Academic Supports and Sense of Belonging

All participants in this stratum expressed positive impressions of their school, and highlighted academic supports that did not exist at neighboring high schools. Academic resilience and persistence was directly enhanced through the sense of belonging. Being part of a supportive network, a sense of belonging reduces stress, whereas being deprived of stable and supportive relationships has been shown to have far-reaching and negative consequences (Osterman, 2000). Further enhancement of these attributes surfaced as participants' related, what they felt, were favorable impressions of them, voiced by faculty and staff. Representative statements by Linda and Alice revealed the influence of these positive impressions on their academic ethic, academic resilience and persistence.

Linda stated,

I would say they view me as nice and smart and capable of doing things even when I, you know, if say, if I don't do a certain test to my best abilities. (Linda, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Alice expressed similar sentiments,

I think my teachers can talk highly of me, because I think I'm an excellent student and follow whatever they tell me to do. (Alice, personal communication, May 30, 2017).

The establishment of supportive relationships with teachers and staff members is documented in the extant literature as having significant influence on the development of academic resilience and persistence. The need for caring teachers is a major concern, particularly for high school students (Bernard, 1993; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

While participants in this stratum cited several supportive relationships with various faculty, the emergent relationship that influenced academic resilience was that of student-counselor. It can be inferred that the non-judgmental nature of the student-counselor relationship, meaning counselors do not issue letter grades or otherwise directly influence classroom success, contributes to the success and ease of these relationships. Representative statements from Gwen and Jeffrey reflect the participant's ease with establishing relationships with their counselors.

Gwen voiced her impression of counselor accessibility,

Yes, I could like go to them when I have a question or any problem and I feel like, I don't know, it just makes me feel like good. (Gwen, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Jeffrey's comment spanned both his relationship with teachers and his counselor,

Yeah, I have been to like a lot of teachers, mostly all my teachers whom-- whom I'm attending the class. I'm always comfortable. With my counselors, too, I am open with them, and there have been no problems and there is no negative or bad. (Jeffrey, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

The data gained from this stratum highlighted a specific need to maximize the unique non-judgmental aspect of student-counselor relationships, and its resulting influence on academic resilience and persistence. Attention also needs to be given to the intentional focus and development of mentoring programs, along with increased teacher- student caring relationships.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings and life stories of 26 current 11th-graders of color, attending an urban high school in Southern California. The 26 participants experienced high incidences of low socioeconomic status and additional risk factors. The data revealed several characteristics that the participants had in common, among those expressed were internal locus of control, self-efficacy and a strong desire to the counter stereotype threat based upon their community or familial circumstance.

Throughout the literature resilience has many definitions, but at the core as it relates to adolescents, resilience describes students who sustain high levels of achievement-motivation, and performance despite the presence of stressful events. Persistence is the outward manifestation of these resilient qualities.

The participants in this study related the prevalence of stressors such as; disparate familial situations, homelessness, adoption and foster care, and the negative influences often associated with growing up in underserved communities. For the participants the influence of familial support, and the expression of high expectations served to counter existing distal and proximal risk factors, allowing for the participants to develop to colloquially develop “street smarts” necessary to navigate their communities and surroundings. “Street smarts” can also be understood as a manifestation of social and emotional resilience.

The intersection of the school’s influence in developing academic resiliency, and enhancing those preexisting characteristics of social and emotional resilience, materialized via positive campus climate. Supportive relationships, and ancillary supports offered were also considered. While the extant literature relates the significance of supportive teacher-student relationships in promoting school belonging, the data from this study reaffirmed the unique status of guidance counselors on a high school campus, and their ability to connect with students in non-judgmental relationships. The trust associated with counselor-student relationships facilitated high school counselor filling varied roles such as; advocate, agent, aspiration builder, and college

knowledge provider. Roles that were crucial to assist students develop a college predisposition, and counter deficit notions with regard to their academic potential and enhancing persistent characteristics.

The next chapter will provide an abbreviated overview of study results, recommendations for educational leaders, suggest next steps for educational reform, and provide recommendations for future research, study limitations, and a summative conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study explored the influence of high school climate in developing resilience and persistence among high school students of color. Using qualitative semi-structured interviews, this study examined the life experiences of 26 11th-grade students of color who grew up facing various high-risk factors known to predict a lack of resilience and persistence. In spite of the risk factors presented, the participant students all reflected social and emotional resilience, and persistence. Persistence was evident and measured by continued pursuit toward high school graduation. Based, however, upon instances of high and low academic resilience, all may not achieve this ultimate goal. Resilience and resiliency discourse often examines, facets of resilience such as; academic, social, and emotional resilience, in isolation. A more effective discourse explores all three facets as interconnected, essential, and centered on the self-righting nature of human development (Bernard, 1993). With consideration given to the self-righting nature that Bernard discusses, Luthar et al., (2000), expanded upon the resilience construct by establishing that for a student to be considered resilient, two coexisting conditions must intersect. The student must first be at risk for negative outcomes, then show evidence of positive adaptation despite the adversity encountered. When compared to the considerations expressed by Bernard and Luthar et al., the participant students were determined, resilient and

persistent, with their lived experiences, providing illumination to the influence of high school climate and related protective factors.

The theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT) was employed to consider the role of stereotypes and stereotype threat, and the resulting barriers to academic success, resiliency and persistence for African Americans and other minority groups (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). Stereotype threat is anxiety or stress triggered by the fear that one might fulfill or be associated with a relevant stereotype (Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998). In educational settings, such as a high school, the anxiety of inadvertently confirming the stereotype has been shown to interfere with and depress academic achievement.

CRT from its beginning sought to examine and explain the divergent experiences for otherwise normal people, from the perspective of how society regards race. CRT contends that racialized norms imbed the practice, values and discourse of North American life (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotunda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stephancic, 2001). Whereas the dominant culture supports college enrollment, in subdominant groups, particularly African-American and Latino students, there are competing voices that clash with the dominant norms with regards to college attendance (Muhammad, 2008). CRT determines that cultural support is a necessary factor for subdominant students in developing a predisposition and predetermination towards high school completion and college attendance, this is in addition to student self-aspiration and ability. Finally, CRT seeks to examine and mitigate those institutional or

societal barriers that do not create a deliberate culture of success, and that often cause students to evaluate high school completion from a cost-benefit analysis

A school climate centered on the study of success helps adolescents thrive. Dalton, Elias and Wanderman (2007) make a distinction between resilience and thriving, whereby they assert that resilience is more closely identified with adequacy, and thriving is more closely linked with excellence. While thriving is the ultimate aspiration, reversing risk must first start with resilience. Character education built into the school day as mini-lessons would specifically target those resilient attributes highlighted by the participants, as a means to reverse risk and promote thriving.

Through the identification of characteristics, factors and mechanisms that facilitate high-risk students to be successful, schools can apply this knowledge to create climates, designed to help counter risk factors (Nelson et al., 2012). A success-oriented climate builds on the strengths of each student, which in turn exerts a powerful motivating protective factor. This is particularly true for “students who receive the opposite message from their families, communities, and the media” (Bernard, 1993, p. 46). Rather than seeing their students as failing, teacher-student relationships and other personal relationships within the school context exhibit the role of respect and the power of encouragement-support dynamics (Rodriguez, 2007).

Professional development for school administrators, faculty and staff, centered on cultural proficiency designed to promote cultural sensitivity and

awareness emerged from this study's results as a method to address the cultural support CRT determines to be an essential component to influencing student academic resilience and persistence. Participants' voice expressed a clear desire for more genuine and supportive interaction with their teachers. Additional evidence points to the need to create trauma-sensitive classrooms, in response to the chronic trauma and concurrent stressors related to minority status, discrimination, alienating schools, and economic hardship.

Context

The lived experiences recounted in this study are retrospective in nature, with participants reporting risk and protective factors that spanned distal and proximal sources. Distal risk factors occur in the social context, whereas proximal risk factors relate to the familial or parental context (Meyers and Taylor, 1998). Reported distal risk factors included: substandard housing, homelessness, excess community violence, negative media and culture coverage. Proximal risk factors included: complex and disjointed family relationships, and familial education levels. These reported occurrences can be either magnified or mitigated by the extent of proximal risk factors in conjunction with protective factors. A primary protective factor in the familial context were high educational expectations, this was true even in instances of low familial education levels. Secondarily, familial support and close supervision provided the emotional resilience to navigate challenging circumstances.

Distal protective factors surfaced as school belonging, support programs and services, and the establishment of positive and supportive relationships with teachers, counselors, and staff. Outside of the family, school is usually the most unchanging institution in a student's life. As such, schools occupy an important place as a buffer for students facing difficult circumstances (Wright, 2013).

Acknowledging this potential requires teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff to reevaluate and think more deeply about how to best establish relationships with their students that are respectful, motivational, and protective.

As it relates to supportive adults outside of the family, Floyd (1996) reminds us that "selected teachers were frequently cited as motivational influences in their quest for academic achievement" (p.185). In the case of the high school featured in this study, participants reported a range of responses that reflect; the establishment of supportive relationships with their teachers. The range spanned, indifference, to a desire for more interaction between teacher and student. Guidance Counselors emerged as the most frequent source of positive support and encouragement, which contributed to academic resilience and persistence.

Throughout the literature, minority students continuously point to their families as a source of encouragement and motivation, yet their lack of familial experiences with higher education provided barriers. To counter this the school itself, as an advocate and agent are called upon to offer additional support to facilitate educational equity, an academic resilience that manifest as persistence and a predisposition to college access.

This study was informed by the following research questions: 1) How do 11th-grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted by remaining in school when they encountered various barriers? 2) How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience and persistence from the perspective of 11th-grade students of color? 3) Despite high levels of risk, how do 11th grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically when they encountered various barriers?

1. How do 11th-grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted by remaining in school when they encountered various barriers?

The participants demonstrated the development of social and emotional resilience as a result of lived experiences such as; attending boarding school in another country apart from their family, instances of residential instability due to economic hardship, homelessness, foster and adoptive experiences, complex familial configuration affecting sibling closeness and parental involvement, and instances of familial member incarceration. A prevalence of internal locus of control, along with success-orientated and failure-avoidant personality typologies emerged from the participant's responses. Even participants who demonstrated low academic resilience, and were credit deficient professed a predisposition to high school completion.

Stereotype avoidance, either related to familial or community association emerged as a strong motivator for academic ethic for participants as they navigated social and academic barriers. Stereotypes and stereotype threat have been shown to present major barriers to academic success for African Americans and other minority groups (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). In educational settings, such as a high school, the anxiety of inadvertently confirming the stereotype has been shown to interfere with and depress academic achievement.

Countervailing stereotype threat is the construct academic ethic, in which African American, Hispanics, and other minority group students, are determined to not conform to the stereotype prescribed to them (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013, Zhang & Smith, 2011). Consistent among all participants was the acknowledgement of at least one supportive relationship, either in the familial or school context that encouraged their academic ethic and achievement. These findings are consistent with Osterman (2000) who states being part of a supportive network, a sense of belonging reduces stress, whereas being deprived of stable and supportive relationships has been shown to have far-reaching and negative consequences.

2. *How do high school cultures and climates support the development of resilience through the lens of persistence from the perspective of 11th-grade students of color?*

The participants reported their impressions of their school's culture and climate, supports offered, and the resulting influence of their developing a resilient and persistent predisposition towards high school completion. Overall impression of their school's culture and climate were favorable, citing supportive and encouraging interaction with campus security, administration, teachers and counselors. The influences of these relationships on correcting non-productive behaviors, enhancing academic ethic, and countering self-doubting were widely expressed. Supportive programs and services such as; free tutoring, access to computers and printers in the library, wellness center, on-site college advisors, and culturally relevant clubs and activities were acknowledged as unique when compared to neighboring high schools, appreciated and widely utilized.

3. *Despite high levels of risk, how do 11th- grade students of color describe the ways in which they persisted academically whey they encountered various barriers?*

Culturally relevant clubs and activities allowed the participant to “see” themselves within the school's curriculum, which promotes school belonging and was a predictor of student engagement contributing to academic ethic. Throughout the literature and social media, we are frequently apprised of the odds stacked against Black and Hispanic males. Rarely, however, are we

presented with studies that highlight their ability to competently move beyond the risks they encounter (Hall, 2007).

Several participants related concerns of certain teachers, disparaging fellow classmates, or voicing diminished expectations. Countering existing deficit notions of student ability, both in the minds of the educators on campus, and the students themselves, is crucial to establishing academically resilient and persistent characteristics (Kimura-Walsh, Yamamura, Griffin & Allen, 2009). Participant, Joseph expressed most clearly a sense of “fatalism”. Darder (1998) says that “Fatalism...negates passion and destroys the capacity to dream.” To the point that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The findings from this study necessitates an invigorated focus on professional development for faculty and staff centered on cultural proficiency and sensitivity, the creation of trauma-sensitive classrooms aimed at fostering resilient learners, and a re-examination of the role of counselors and teachers designed to further enhance the supportive qualities of their relationships with students.

Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Teachers regularly receive training on various district initiatives, or implementation of new teaching strategies; e.g. Thinking Maps, Professional Learning Communities, Small Learning Communities. Problems of policy and practice require a more proactive approach. If we want critical and culturally

relevant curriculum and pedagogy to become the norm versus the exception, training and focus need to be given to this powerful approach to teaching.

Studies conducted by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008), Halax (2014), and Scott et al (2013) all points to the need for skilled and culturally competent teachers, and has been cited by many students across these studies as being vital to their development of resiliency and self-identity. Similarly, participants in this study expressed desire for a more consistent and supportive relationship with their teachers.

Targeted professional development is recommended, and has been implemented by this researcher, with the specific aim to address areas of deficiency as it relates to skilled and culturally competent teachers. Partnering with a provider, the target high is now in the first year of Cultural Proficiency professional development. Cultural proficiency, as it relates to schools and institutions, looks at policies, and practices at the organizational level, which in turn influence values and beliefs manifested through behaviors at the individual level.

To be successful Cultural Proficiency professional development was deemed a shared priority, by site administration and teacher leaders at the target high school. An inside-out approach was designed to; 1) to raise awareness of how we as individuals and as schools or institutions work with others, 2) make us aware of how we respond to those different from us, 3) spans visible and not so visible differences, 4) preparing us to live and function in a world of differences.

The cultural proficiency continuum was introduced to allow teachers and staff to objectively gauge where they currently reside, and to better prepare them for the journey ahead.

The Cultural Proficiency continuum spans six levels, with the majority of the staff at the target high school self-identifying themselves to be at cultural blindness and cultural pre-competence. This self-identification was telling, in that the target high school has an extremely diverse staff, with 23% hailing from African nations, India and Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. These are all nations that practice a European method of schooling that places a high emphasis on student obedience and compliance. These are traits that do not always manifest themselves in the community where this study was conducted.

- **Cultural Destructiveness** – see the difference and try to stomp it out
- **Cultural Incapacity** – see the difference and make it wrong
- **Cultural Blindness** – see the difference, but act like you don't
- **Cultural Pre-Competence** – see the difference, but respond inappropriately
- **Cultural Competence** – see the difference and understand the *difference* that difference makes
- **Cultural Proficiency** – see the difference, respond positively and affirming in a variety of settings.

Halax (2014, p. 252) states the use of critical and culturally relevant curriculum, has been shown to work “especially well to re-engage students who are on the verge of being marginalized into disinterest.” CRT seeks to inform the field of education in particular about the experiences of students of color at all levels of our nation's education system. While CRT has begun to receive

acknowledgement within the educational and policymaking community, the lessons and findings that have come out of CRT have not translated well to widespread policy improvement, or improved educational opportunities and conditions. Cultural proficiency as a pedagogy seeks to apply principles of CRT to develop cultural sensitivity using culturally proficient practices and policies, which focuses on inherent student assets to overcome academic barriers.

Participants in this study recounted their experiences with disjointed families, community violence, and familial instability due to frequent changes in the housing, all are contributing factors to chronic trauma. In addition to professional development focused on promoting cultural proficiency, trauma sensitivity and awareness, professional development have also been introduced to provide a two pronged approach to increasing school-based supportive factors. Twice monthly professional development is employing an alternating focus, to increase the connectedness between the two topics.

A text, *Fostering Resilient Learners: Strategies for Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Classroom* by Souers and Hall (2016), provided the basis for this professional development. Souers and Hall (2016) remind us on page 55, "...that children exposed to inescapable, overwhelming stress may act out pain". They go on to say "...if we only knew what happened last night or this morning before he/she got to school, we would be shielding the same child we're now reprimanding" (p. 55). These two passages establish the imperative of creating trauma-sensitive classrooms, in conjunction with culturally relevant curriculum, to support our students of color in the development of academic ethic, and

resilience, evidenced through persistence to high school completion and beyond. This holds particularly true when students hold the perception that faculty and staff view them as intellectually incapable (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013).

Given these challenges, for students who have every reason to give up and throw in the towel, many still persevere, and display remarkable resilience with the goal of college matriculation and graduation. This establishes a new educational mandates to create trauma sensitive classrooms to enhance resilience and persistence. Souers and Hall (2016) support this reality, “the new challenge is to balance that push for academic success with the overwhelming need to provide all the Julies out there with a safe, trustworthy environment with safe, trustworthy adults...a trauma-sensitive learning environment” (p. 35).

Professional development aimed at promoting Cultural Proficiency and Trauma awareness have as their central purpose, the enhancement of positive and supportive relationships between all levels of school staff and its students.

Participants of this study specifically reported the positive influence of their counselors at helping them to remain resilient and persistent. The extant literature consistently provides evidence of the influence of positive relationships with faculty and staff in the school context. Throughout this study, while counselors were praised, participants continuously pointed to the desire for more positive interaction with their teachers. The emergent data from this study informed the need to create more intentional opportunities for teachers and staff to form supportive relationships. This researcher, his administrative, and site

leadership teams are developing a means to promote on-campus mentoring programs between all levels of school staff, that mirror elements of sibling closeness and that are sustainable. Contractual limitations abound with regards to mandating implementation for all. Currently mentoring exists based on teacher, and staff initiative. Under-utilized contractual language, however, in the form of adjunct duties provides hope.

In response to participants' desire for more positive interactions with their teachers, the primary researcher looked towards the state of North Carolina. North Carolina has developed an Early Learning Network of Training Modules (<http://modules.nceIn.fpgunc.edu/foundations/module-intro>) that utilizes a three tier approach for professional development, aimed at enhancing supportive teacher-student relationships. Tier I presents universal practices designed to support all students and promote healthy development. Tier II provides instructional practices designed to prevent problem behaviors, while promoting academic resilience. Tier III focuses on interventions that, in part, promote persistence by remaining in school, and achieving academically. These three tiers are presented as 11 modules that focus on topics such as, promoting positive relationships, promoting emotional literacy and empathy, recognizing and controlling anger and impulses, and problem solving.

The role of high school counselors as it relates to promoting academic resilience and persistence emerged clearly from this study, and requires this researcher to provide more intentional opportunities for these interactions to occur. In addition to providing more intentional opportunities for counselor-

student interactions this data indicates that high school principals, including this researcher, need to assist counselors by preserving the importance of college counseling time for their counselors.

Participants in the high risk stratum related informational barriers that made navigating the college application process daunting. This is consistent with students in urban, low-income, under-served communities. In these communities high school counselors fill the varied roles of; advocate, agent, aspiration builder, and college knowledge provider. It is in this capacity as college knowledge provider that high school counselors, fulfill one of their most important roles, aspiration building, which in turn facilitates the other components of college knowledge attainment.

Instead of reducing school counselor positions, school districts need to actively hire more counselors. This researcher working with district office has increased the number of on-site counselors from four to six. Through joint funding between, site and district, two college advisors have been added. These two efforts have increased the number of on-site counselors from six to eight, resulting in increased service and access for students at the target high school.

Cultural support has been established through CRT as a necessary factor for subdominant students in developing a college predisposition and predetermination, this is in addition to student self-aspiration and ability. For populations that are not as fluent in the college application process, the role of the counselor is crucial. "To the extent that families and familial extensions are

unfamiliar with the college and the returns thereto, they may be less likely to support such “risky” endeavors” (Muhammad, 2008, p. 85). This finding is not unique to just African-American students, but exists for Hispanics and other underserved student populations.

Participants of this study specifically reported the positive influence of their counselors at helping them to remain resilient and persistent. For students of color, in urban, low-income, under-served communities, such as the community and high school highlighted in this study, the high school counselor fills the varied roles of; advocate, agent, aspiration builder, and college knowledge provider. Roles that are crucial to assist students develop a college predisposition, and counter deficit notions with regard to their academic potential, and college worthiness. (Valencia, 1997).

The aspects and benefits of establishing trusting relationships, along with the associated bridge versus barrier phenomenon have been discussed throughout this study. Two frameworks address this bridge versus barrier phenomenon as it relates to high school counselors and their student-counselor relationships. Critical race theory (CRT) and opportunity to learn (OTL). Both frameworks examine the manner in which the counselors themselves view their role as it relates to college knowledge providers, and how their perceptions impact micro-level dynamics.

Opportunity to learn (OTL), often associated with CRT, was initially conceived by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational

Achievement (IAEA) as a measurement tool to determine if learning was the result of ability or learning differences (Schwartz, 1995). As it applies to the role of the high school counselor, OTL may be used to provide linkage between the school context (school tracking policies or teacher quality) and learning outcomes in terms of educational inequality.

Addressing the whole student as it relates to matters that span social, emotional, and academic domains informed this researcher with the need for to develop an on-campus Wellness Center. The Wellness Center integrates the existing resources of guidance counselors and school psychologist, and introduces the addition of a site-funded social worker. To better support and encourage our students towards academic resilience and persistence, we have to acknowledge the existing trauma and the limiting factors.

As reported by several participants of this study, the transition to high school proved challenging which was associated with increased workload, adapting to a credit-based system, and stated distancing, by teachers, from their students. Nationwide, the transition from eighth grade to high school is a pivotal educational point, which continues to present significant systemic challenges. The transition, and the success of this transition has lasting implications for students towards developing the commitment resilience necessary to complete high school. In a report to the Southern Regional Educational Board, Bottoms (2008) describes the “make or break” nature of the ninth-grade experience in determining if a student continues on with high school or becomes disenchanted

and disengaged. This researcher will make recommendations to address this phenomenon in the section below.

Next Steps for Educational Reform

The participants in this study were exposed to significant levels and sources of dysfunction and risk on a near daily basis. The proliferation of violence and secondary traumatization, combined with increases in the levels of poverty and societal moral distress, contribute to declines in academic performance and the negative outcomes of stress experienced by American children and adolescents (Condly, 2006). The community and educational leaders, for the high school, district, and communities served in this study, are attempting to address the various social morays that exist, but must face the realities of fiscal limitations, and the dysfunction of existing discourse.

The challenges facing the high school, district, and community leadership are not isolated. The national discourse reveals a fragmented approach to addressing these social morays. Part of this stems from policy makers at all levels being, “mired in debate over who is to blame for the existing academic or achievement gap...with reluctance to share responsibility for finding solutions” (Noguera, 2012, p. 66). Noguera (2012) highlights what is an enlightened approach to understanding the achievement gap. He describes the achievement gap as an over-arching umbrella under which a “multi-dimensional phenomenon” exists that relates to educational inequity going all the way back to early

childhood education. It is the collection of gaps; preparation gap, allocation gap, parent gap, teacher-student gap, and performance gap that contributes to the perpetuation of “the gap” as we know it. The high school, which is the focus of this study, and high schools in general, cannot undo the educational and societal distress that presents itself via the students. The high school, as an institution can; however, promote fundamental reforms to develop communities, i.e. school sites, of caring and support for young people. Policy and practice driven by deficits, centers on the study of failure and utilizes distorted data to promote negative stereotypes. Earl and Ryan (1996) echo this sentiment, citing the need for supportive school climates that permit students to practice and develop problem solving skills, and a sense of purpose and the future, contributes to the development of academic resilience.

This researcher as a site administrator faces the duality of site leadership, while operating within the framework and limitations of a unified school district. Extensive discussions with district level leadership have resulted in the educational reforms being implemented at the target high school. Extensive research highlights the shortcomings of one-off workshops common in many school districts across this country. The district, to which the high school in this study belongs, participates by often using this common practice. Recent trends, however, reveal an attempt to cease using this professional learning model. Hervey (2017) suggests utilizing an approach to professional development [learning] that is common in several overseas countries, “recent research has found that ongoing, job embedded, collaborative professional learning is proving

to be highly effective” (p. 1). A significant and sustained shift in practice is ongoing, and involves reflection, of the sort provided by ongoing and job embedded professional learning (Joyce and Showers, 2002). Recognition of the shortcomings of one-off workshops, along with this researcher’s personal experience, resulted in the implementation of ongoing professional development, with intentional opportunities for self-reflection, are employed in the areas of Cultural Proficiency and Trauma Sensitivity.

The need for a change in pedagogical practice is made evident by the increased and ever changing demographics of American schools, this is particularly true in California where this study was conducted. Witherspoon (2017) establishes that in the fall of 2014, for the first time in the history of American schools, the overall number of Latinos, African-American, and Asian students, students of color, in public K-12 classrooms surpassed the number of non-Hispanic whites.

Cultural proficiency as a pedagogical practice seeks to develop cultural sensitivity using culturally proficient practices and policies, and aligns with CRT through the core principles of trust, respect for diversity, educational equity, fairness and social justice. The complexity of diversity in our schools presents an increased range of languages, races, cultures, and values. Witherspoon (2017) points towards a growing cultural gap between teachers, staff, and students, whose life experiences differ from those of their teachers. Cultural proficiency as a pedagogy centers on promoting educational equity, with an aim for every

student to develop a strong sense of identity, through cultural understanding that promotes empathy, affirmation and opportunity.

To be successful cultural proficiency must be a shared priority, which spans personal and professional practices. Evidence reveals that site and district leadership for the target high school in this study, have adopted an on-going professional learning approach to establish and promote cultural proficiency. As professional learning, it employs an inside-out approach that highlights; 1) how individuals, schools and institutions work with others, 2) raises awareness of how we as educators respond to those who are different from us, and 3) spans visible and not visible differences. From the perspective of practice and policy, cultural proficiency examines practices at the organizational level, which in turn influence values and beliefs manifested through behaviors at the individual level that either permit or inhibit cross-cultural interactions between teacher and student. Lindsey, et al (2010) provides that cultural proficiency enables educators to respond effectively in a cross-cultural environment by using a powerful set of interrelated tools to guide personal and organizational change.

Absent ongoing, job embedded, professional learning centered on promoting cultural proficiency, the growing culture gap referenced by Witherspoon (2017) and Lindsey et al (2010) will increase and result in cultural blindness. Cultural blindness views the cultural differences between teacher and student as an impediment, rather than an asset towards academic success. Landa (2011) connects cultural blindness to increased student disengagement

from school, and reflected in lower graduation rates for students of color. Cultural proficiency when compared against cultural blindness embraces the differences and attributes of our diverse student population, and affirms these constructs in a positive manner across a wide range of settings.

Related to professional learning centered on cultural proficiency, is the imperative of developing trauma-sensitive classrooms. The life experiences of the participants in this study highlight the increased complexities of life for students, who quite often are coping with situations beyond their control, and requires a new approach to supporting student achievement. Souers and Hall (2010) assert that “students like Julie arrive at school tired, scared, anxious, angry, and overwhelmed by any host of events that we refer to trauma” (p. 33). For years, we as educators, have asked students to leave their “baggage” at the door, and switch to a learning mode in a somewhat magical expectation. We repeatedly ask students to separate their personal lives from their academic lives, yet as educators, we often struggle to separate our personal lives from work. If mature, educated adults struggle with this duality, how can we expect our students who are less emotionally advanced, to do the same? A component of chronic trauma, stereotype threat, has been presented by participants, and the extant literature as a contributing factor to decreased academic achievement. Stereotype threat is anxiety or stress triggered by the fear that one might fulfill or be associated with a relevant stereotype (Steele, 1992, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1998).

For several participants in this study, the incidence of stress and trauma inducing circumstances within their familial and community context, was reported as a barrier to academic resilience. Implementation of the on-campus Wellness Center seeks to mitigate those stated barriers. In educational settings, such as a high school, the anxiety of inadvertently confirming the stereotype has been shown to interfere with and depress academic achievement (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2013). The depression of academic achievement is linked to the reduction of the working memory capacity. Working memory capacity is linked to the ability to focus one's attention on a single task, while remaining unfocused on task-irrelevant thoughts (Engle, 2002). To state simply, a student is so focused on those incidents that contribute to chronic trauma and stress within their lives, while also trying not to fulfill the existing stereotypes, that their ability to perform academically is affected.

Several participants in this study referenced the skills necessary to successfully navigate their communities, and to avoid the negative outcomes associated with underserved communities. Creating trauma-sensitive classrooms, helps support those students who exist in a near constant state of alert. Wright (2013), in his article, *I Keep Me Safe*, reminds us that "a child whose life is overflowing with challenges doesn't know when to stop struggling or how to embrace joy" (p. 41). A unique challenge associated with creating trauma-sensitive classrooms is acknowledging the bicultural reality as expressed by participants in this study. Students have to demonstrate a type of fluency that enables them to communicate in the school context, as well as, the

communication patterns necessary to exist in their communities (Lindsey et al., 2010; Witherspoon, 2017).

Focusing on attributes versus deficits is a central component to promoting culturally proficient and trauma-sensitive classrooms. Several participants discussed some of the legal barriers to their academic success, and associated impact on their familial make-up, these factors present an incidence of chronic trauma often overlooked. Undocumented youth must face the most difficult challenge associated with their status upon high school graduation...many have internalized the US values and expectations that equate academic success to economic rewards...ironically, their social incorporation sensitizes them further to the contradiction that, despite their academic success, they are barred from the opportunity to integrate legally, educationally, and economically in US society (Abrego, 2006). The complexities associated with developing trauma-sensitive classrooms are daunting, however, the moral imperative for educators necessitates an intentionality to promote educational equity, and acknowledge those internal attributes participants have related that manifest as resilience and persistence.

Participants in this study, repeatedly highlighted the influence of supportive relationships with their counselors. For high school students of color in urban, low-income, under-served communities, the high school counselor fills the varied roles of; advocate, agent, aspiration builder, and college knowledge provider (Valencia, 1997). In this capacity the high school counselor plays one of their most important roles, aspiration building, which in turn facilitates the other

components of college knowledge attainment. The positive effect of trust, as outlined by Tschannen-Moran (2014), reveals the transformative power of trusting relationships for students of color in particular. The absence of trust results in students being less likely to meet with their counselor, ask questions, or seek guidance in the college application process. For the participants in this study, the absence of trust did not emerge as a significant factor, although certain counselors were mentioned more than others as being supportive of their counselees.

McDonough & Calderone (2006) state “College counselors represent one of the single most important forms of college and financial aid information for low-income children and their families” (p. 1704). Despite this, evidence continues to show that the main causal factor in the under-enrollment of low-income students into college, especially minority students, is the lack of information on college costs, and the perceived lack of financial aid availability (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2001, 2002). CRT and OTL point to the impact the counselors have on components of the college preparation and advising tasks that are central to their purpose. These components include; a) structuring information and organizing activities that foster and support students’ college aspirations, b) assisting parents in understanding their role in fostering and supporting college aspirations, c) assisting students with academic preparation for college, d) supporting and influencing students in college decision making, and f) organizationally focusing their respective schools on its college mission (Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 2005a, 2005b).

The priority of counseling tasks, at the target high school, and documented in public schools across the country, particularly in low-income communities are scheduling, testing, and discipline, followed by drop-out, pregnancy and suicide prevention, personal crisis counseling and tardy sweeps. As a result of this disparate focus of activities, there exists a large variation in terms of counselors being proactive versus being passive as it relates to college information distribution, and the manner in which it is distributed. This disparity was noted by the participants, as they noted which counselors, at the target high school, were the most accessible and supportive, as it relates to proactive support and encouragement of academic ethic, resilience and persistence. The extant literature and study findings, point to these three attributes as predictors of developing a high school completion, and college attending predisposition.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a student to counselor ratio of 1:250. Looking at 2009-2010 data the most recent available the U.S. Department of Education reflects a national student to counselor ratio average of 1:459. Of all the fifty states and the District of Columbia only five states were close to or below the ASCA target; DC (208), Hawaii (279), New Hampshire (232), Vermont (208) and Wyoming (183). Four states had the highest student to counselor ratio; Arizona (815), California (810), Minnesota (771), and Utah (711).

In large urban high schools, particularly in California, where the student to counselor ratio is among the highest, counselors tend to focus their time on

either the highest achieving or the most disruptive students. The largest group in the middle is effectively unserved, and as a result are substantively denied college knowledge and information regarding the cost of college attendance. It is important to note that this large middle group of students, are the one most likely to attend a community college or similar program for lack of information regarding four year college options. What this data indicates that high school principals need to assist counselors by preserving the importance of college counseling time for their counselors. Instead of reducing school counselor positions, school districts need to actively hire more counselors.

If high school principals are going to make student counseling time sacred, then counselors need to be more deliberate and accessible. Approximately 7,200 students drop out of a U. S. School each day, this equates to approximately 1.3 million students each year who fail to graduate from high school in four years (Educational Projects in Education Research, 2009). To stem the talent loss that is currently affecting our schools, our counselors need to redefine how they target and assist students. The traditional focus of college readiness on academic performance alone, may fail to capture developmental processes needed complete high school, enter, succeed and graduate from post-secondary education. (Hooker and Brand, 2010, p. 76).

Several participants in this study referenced their difficulty in transitioning from middle to high school. Their shared experiences are not unique, nationally the transition from middle to high school continues to present challenges for

school districts. For high schools, and districts like the one in this study, academic resilience among students of color is affected by the success of this transition. Alternatively, as it relates to the transition to high school, academic resilience in students is described as a change from students achieving at lower levels in the eighth grade and, subsequently, achieving at significantly higher levels by grade 10 (Catterall, 1998; Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997). Catterall (1998) discussed the construct of commitment resilience, in relation to academic resilience, as the drive to continue despite doubts of one's ability or the eventual outcome.

The transition from eighth grade to high school is a pivotal educational point, and the success of this transition has lasting implications for students towards developing the commitment resilience necessary to complete high school. School leaving or high school non-completion begins during the eighth-grade transition, particularly for low academically performing eighth-grade students of color. In a report to the Southern Regional Educational Board, Bottoms (2008) describes the "make or break" nature of the ninth-grade experience in determining if a student continues on with high school or becomes disenchanted and disengaged.

Several study participants related their struggles in transitioning to high school. These participants shared a common knowledge among middle school students, that passing a class has little influence on being promoted to the next grade level, or promotion to high school. This is in direct contrast to the reality of high school, which adopts a credit based system similar to higher education. If at

the end of four years, students do not have a prescribed number of credits, that reflects a specific distribution of these earned credits, a student will not receive a high school diploma. Conversely, students entering post-secondary education have been exposed to and are fluent in the language of credit dependent educational systems.

Leaving school before high school graduation dramatically reduces the opportunities over the life course, especially among poor and minority adolescents (Ensminger, Lamkin and Jacobson, 1996). The research has shown this time and again, yet the problem persists. For the target high school, and possibly high schools like it across the nation, this well-documented reality necessitates a proactive approach to support and enhance the transition from middle to high school. Bottoms (2008) proposes a ninth-grade design that includes a ninth-grade academy that is heterogeneously grouped.

Presently, the prevailing models of ninth-grade academies target at-risk student populations almost exclusively. Secondary models, promote summer bridge programs to acclimate promoting eighth-graders to the demands and rigors of ninth-grade and high school in general. Additional models, target select academically achieving eighth-graders to dual enroll in their future high school, and take one or two high school classes. While varying approaches to address the middle to high school transition exist, none are currently in widespread or systemic use.

This researcher learned the target high school in this study, employed a ninth-grade academy for a period of time, and discontinued the use five-six

school years ago. The reasons given did not provide a clear rationale, although “lack of interest?” among staff surfaced as a prevailing factor.

The literature and existing research provide the imperative for a revised approach, as it relates to improving student outcomes, academic ethic, resilience and persistence in high school students of color.

This researcher recommends three systemic educational reforms to address the importance of the middle to high school transition. These recommendations are not listed in a specific order; 1) the utilization of summer bridge programs, 2) concurrent enrollment for certain eighth-grade students, and 3) introduction of a credit based system in middle school. The implementation of a mandatory summer bridge program for all incoming ninth-grade students, as a means to acclimate all incoming ninth-graders to the demands and rigors of high school. For eighth-grade students who demonstrate academic ability, this researcher recommends a systemic approach that permits these students to enroll concurrently at their neighboring high school, for no more than two courses. This approach increases familiarity with the high school culture and the credit-based system that all high schools operate, and permits these students to begin ninth-grade having already earned five to ten credits.

The final recommendation is eminently more reaching, and would require action at the state and county levels. Implementing a credit based system in the seventh-grade and eighth-grade of middle school, provides a smooth transition to the increased demands of middle versus elementary school, while academically preparing students for success at the high school level. As it currently exists

within our educational system, eighth grade students enter high school, and are faced with major adjustments; the larger size of campus, the scope and complexity of school work, and the sudden realization that passing a class is no longer optional. Due to the credit based system of high school, passing each class, the first time, is now a requirement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could expand on this topic utilizing one or more of five study foci. These five recommendations are not listed in a specific order of precedence. They include; 1) a broader participant pool to analyze student outcomes in classrooms in which critical, culturally relevant, and trauma-sensitive teaching methods are not utilized. The focus should be given to compare teachers who espouse high academic expectations, the agency and the role of empowerment through education versus those classrooms where this pedagogical approach is less evident. 2) Additional research could be conducted in other settings, in an attempt to replicate and validate the results of this study. 3), Problems of practice suggest increased focus on the risk/persistence continuum as it relates to student connectedness and belonging, and if there have been increases in outcomes where schools intentionally focused on this dynamic. 4) Future research could explore programs designed to facilitate a successful transition from eighth-grade to high school, and 5) the extant literature points to familial education levels as a predictor of student academic success. The results of this study, however, did not identify a noticeable connection

between familial educational levels and academic resilience. It did reveal possible indicators of college aspiration based upon familial education. Future research might focus on this dynamic.

Limitations of Study

The researcher acknowledges that there are several limitations to this study's design. First, caution in terms of generalizing beyond this study is suggested. All of the participants in the sample are currently 11th-grade students living in Southern California, attending one particular high school. The study may be further limited by the small sample size; however, it does provide specific insight into the life experiences of a group of 11th-grade students and how they were able to develop resilience and persistent, further enhanced by their high school.

This study was dependent on participants' recall of past events, as a result the data derived was subjective. Additionally, due to the age of the participants, interpretation and understanding of certain lived experiences may be uncertain.

To avoid direct implications of power and influence, the researcher utilized a proxy recruiter and two proxy interviewers. As a result, the interpretation of the obtained data is dependent solely on the transcripts.

Though results and interpretations presented in this study, should be viewed through the lens of these limitations, they should not detract from the

overall conclusions. These conclusions reveal that the participants in this study demonstrated social and emotional resilience developed in response to chronic distal and proximal risk factors. The target high school of this study enhanced these attributes, to develop academic ethic and resilience manifested through the lens of persistence.

Conclusion

Based on the life experiences of the 26 participants, and the findings that emerged relating to high schools, influencing resilience and persistence in students of color, the following conclusions were made.

First, educational reform is the civil rights issue of this generation, and remains elusive, especially in underserved communities, such as the one featured in this study. As the demographics of our country continue to change, to the point that minorities are projected to become the collective majority, this is based on U.S. Census projections (cited earlier in this study) by the year 2050, we must accept and acknowledge, “That children represent the future of the country. We all have a stake in the educational success of low-income children of color” (Warren, 2014, p.13).

Further, this study revealed specific next steps related to developing culturally proficient practices and policies, trauma-sensitive classrooms, intentional promotion of student-teacher mentoring and support, and enhancing the role of high school counselors as an advocate and agent. The findings from

this study provide the imperative to embrace these next steps and to ensure implementation with fidelity, as a means of positively influencing the development of resilience and persistence in high school students of color. Each student brings a unique set of attributes and cultural knowledge with them to school each day. Every day, we as educators ask our students to “code switch”, between the cultures of home and school, and to embrace the culture of the school. As educators, we also need to “code switch”, and recognize the degree of social and emotional resilience and persistence our students already possess, just to arrive daily, and then build upon and enhance upon those constructs to develop their academic ethic, academic resilience and persistence.

Finally, this study informs the need for critical reflection by educators, to better identify their biases, and how those biases act as barriers to student success. Critical reflection, like professional learning, is best received as an on-going process. A process in which there is no single approach to supporting students of color. The cultures our students bring with them daily, are not monolithic, they are as diverse as each of our life experiences. Critical reflection requires us to examine our philosophy, theory, and practice and how this manifests in the manner in which we support our students of color. Society expects us, as educators, to employ educational practices that support and value cultural diversity. Our moral authority demands that we value cultural diversity and employ educational practices that are good for all students.

APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



Stephen Franklin <005066811@coyote.csusb.edu>

IRB-FY2017-137 - Initial: IRB Full Board Approval Letter

1 message

mgillesp@csusb.edu <mgillesp@csusb.edu>

Mon, Apr 24, 2017 at 9:45 AM

To: 005066811@coyote.csusb.edu, dschnorr@csusb.edu, dwilson@csusb.edu

Date: Apr 24, 2017

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Full Board Review

IRB# FY2017-137

Status : **Approved**

Mr. Stephen Franklin and Dr. Donna Schnorr
Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mr. Franklin and Dr. Schnorr:

Your application to use human subjects, titled, "Exploring Organizational Factors that Influence Resiliency and Persistence Among High School Students of Color," has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document submitted with your IRB application is the official version for use in your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended through the Cayuse IRB system protocol change form. **Your application is approved for one year from April 21, 2017 through April 20, 2018. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study**

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- 1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,
- 2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
- 3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
- 4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Caroline Vickers

Caroline Vickers, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

CV/MG

APPENDIX B
STUDENT SELECTION CRITERIA

Student Selection Criteria

Participant # _____

This selection criteria seeks to ensure a stratified sample of 11th grade high school students of color that span the spectrum of:

High Achiever + High Risk Factor, High Achiever + Low Risk Factor, Low Achiever + High Risk Factor and Low Achiever + Low Risk Factor

Participant names will be known only during the Informed Consent phase of research. All interviews will be conducted by a surrogate investigator, with pseudonyms assigned to each participant prior to turning data over to the primary investigator.

Gender:

Male _____ Female _____ Transgender _____

Ethnicity:

African-American (Black) _____ Hispanic/Latino _____ Asian/Pacific Islander _____

Other _____

Risk Factor: (check all that apply)

Low SES _____ Single Parent Home _____ Dual Parent Home _____ Grandparent/Aunt/Guardian _____

DACA _____

McKinney-Vento Act: Foster _____ Homeless _____

(Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals aka Dream Act) *(California Legislation sponsors to protect these vulnerable groups)*

English Learner (EL) _____ SPED: _____

RSP _____ SDC _____

Special Education and related subgroups: RSP =Resource Specialist Program

SDC = Special Day Class

Parent Education Level:

Non HS Graduate _____ HS Graduate _____ Some College _____ Bachelors _____

Masters _____ Masters + _____

Academic Achievement:

G.P.A. (list G.P.A.) _____ Credit Deficient _____ On-Track _____

AVID _____

MESA _____

(Advancement via Individual Determination) *(Math, Engineering, Science and Arts Program)*

NHS _____

AP/Honors _____

(National Honor Society)

(Advanced Placement/ Honors)

APPENDIX C
HOUSTON INTERVIEW GUIDE 2010

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Houston, L.S. (2010). *Resilience among at-risk children of poverty: Recommendations for educators who were raised in poverty* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). California State University, Fresno

Interview Guide

The questions below are a guide for the interview. The interviewer will ask questions from the guide and follow up with clarifying probes.

Each interview will be conducted in the same order:

- a) introduce self to the participant;
- b) explain briefly the objectives of the study: "This study aims to get the participant's insights, beliefs and ideas on how they became a successful educator and suggestions about what will help students living in poverty to be resilient";
- c) assure participant that all answers will be confidential and information gained during the interview will be used for this study;
- d) ask permission to tape record the interview; and
- e) after the participants signed the permission form (see Appendix D) they were asked to answer the questions noted in the guide.

I. Childhood

- a. What was your childhood like?
- b. How many siblings do you have? What kind of relationship did you have with your siblings?

- c. Tell me about your family and how they supported you as a child?
- d. Tell me about your neighborhood and community while growing up. Where did you grow up?
- e. Did you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why or why not?
- f. What was your earliest memory before starting school?
- g. As a child were you involved in community activities?
- h. Did you attend church on a regular basis?
- i. Was there an opportunity for you to work outside your home?
- j. Explain your family rules and consequences.
- k. Who monitored your behavior and whereabouts?
- l. What hardships did you endure growing up?
- m. Tell me about a time when someone helped you. How did you feel?
- n. What were your most significant challenges growing up?
- o. Tell me about your relationship with your mother, father, or guardian?

II. School

- a. How did you feel about elementary school?
- b. What do you remember about elementary school?
- c. What do you remember about high school? How did you feel about high school?
- d. What was school like for you?
- e. How do you think other people (teachers and students) viewed you? Did their opinions affect you?
- f. How did your childhood poverty affect your schooling?

- g. Tell me about a time when you worked hard to do something and you were successful. How did you feel?
- h. In school did you have a positive relationship with an educator? Describe that relationship? How did that relationship change you?
- i. How were you motivated to finish school?
- j. How does your family view education? What role did they have in your education?
- k. Do you remember a time when you acted on your convictions or stood up for your rights?
- l. Explain your childhood beliefs about alcohol and drug use?
- m. Tell me about a time you resisted negative peer pressure or a dangerous situation while in school.
- n. Tell me about a time in school that you remember having control over what happened to you.
- o. Tell me about the first time you realized that your life had a purpose.
- p. What were the most significant challenges you faced as a child?
- q. What factors at school helped you become successful?
- r. What factors at school hindered your success?
- s. Were there specific strategies that helped you learn?
- t. What has motivated you to succeed academically?
Explain why you attended college? How did you feel about college?

III. Success

- a. Do the views of your family affect the choices you make? Please explain your response.
- b. What significant persons have had a positive affect on your life? Please explain.

- c. Do you remember the first time that you felt successful? What happened and how did it affect your life?
- d. What events in your life do you see as most successful?
- e. What do you see as a successful life? What does it include?
- f. What characteristics or qualities would you use to describe people who have faced difficulties and overcome them?
- g. Think back to adversities you have faced in your life, and how you coped with them. What strategies did you use to cope with them? What other factors helped you in facing these adversities?
- h. What do you do when you face difficulties in your life now?
- i. What do you do to keep mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy?

IV. Adulthood

- a. Can you share a story about how you managed to overcome challenges you faced personally, in your family or in your community?
- b. Given what you have said about your life, what early influences encouraged you?
- c. How would you describe your relationship with your family now?
- d. Why did you go into education?
- e. How did your childhood experiences affect you as an educator?
- f. As an educator what do you do to help children who are disadvantaged?

- g. Is there any advice you would give to a child of poverty that expresses an interest in furthering their education?
- h. Explain your beliefs about the role teachers play in child development.
- i. What is your philosophy of teaching?
- j. Do you think educators should treat children of poverty differently? If so, how?
- k. What are your (or your staff's) perceptions or expectations of the academic achievement of your students who receive free and reduced lunch?
- l. Is there any advice you would give to teachers or administrators to help children of poverty?
- m. What do you think helps children overcome adversity?
- n. Do your experiences lead you to treat or think about children differently?

Closure

- That is all I would like to ask; is there anything else you would like to add?

At the end of the interview:

- The interviewee was thanked for his or her time.
- The interviewee was asked if a follow up conversation would be possible if additional questions or the need to clarify information occurred while writing the life history.

APPENDIX D
HOUSTON LETTER OF CONSENT

March 17, 2017

Dear Mr. Franklin,

You have my permission to utilize my phone questionnaire from my dissertation, *Resilience Among At-Risk Children of Poverty: Recommendations from Educators who were Raised in Poverty* and modify it to suit your study.

Please let me know if you need further assistance. My new email is lisasuehouston@gmail.com.

Best wishes,


Lisa Houston

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

To facilitate data collection for this study, below is a guide used to achieve consistency during the interview. The interviewer will ask questions from the guide below and follow up with clarifying questions as needed.

Each interview will be conducted in the same manner and order of questions. To start the interviewer will:

- i. Introduce self to each participant
- ii. Explain briefly the objective of the study: “This study seeks to understand organizational factors within the school setting and the resulting influence on promoting the development of resilience through the lens of persistence among high school students of color.”(paraphrase if necessary)
- iii. Assure participant that all answers will be confidential, and that information gained during the interview will only be used for this study or related publications.
- iv. Participant identification will be protected through the use of pseudonyms with no reference to identifying characteristics or description.
- v. Ask permission to tape record the interview.
- vi. After each participant assents to the interview, they will be asked the questions noted below in the interview guide.

Each interview session will begin with the interviewer sharing the following quote:

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day, that says I’ll try again tomorrow” Mary Anne Radmacher. (n.d.).

The purpose in using this quote to begin the interview session, is to get the participant thinking

how this statement relates to their experience as it relates to persistence.

Childhood

- a. Briefly talk about your childhood. How many siblings do you have, and what kind of relationship do you have with your siblings?
- b. Tell me about your family and how they supported you growing up? Do they expect you to do well in school?
- c. Do your parents expect you to get a H.S diploma? Do your parents expect you to go to college?
- d. Tell me about your neighborhood and community while growing up. Did you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why or why not?

School

- a. How do you feel about high school?
- b. How do you think other people (teachers, counselors, students) view you? Do their opinions matter or affect you?
- c. Have you been able to form a positive relationship with any adult at your high school (teacher, counselor, secretary, etc)? Describe that relationship(s), and how has that relationship(s) supported or changed you?

- d. What factors in high school have helped you to feel successful? What factors in high school have hindered your success or caused you to doubt your chances for success?

Success

- a. Tell me about a time when you worked hard to do something and you were successful. How did you feel?
- b. What characteristics or qualities would you use to describe people who have faced challenges or difficulties and overcame them?
- c. Think back to a time when you experienced challenges or difficulties in your life. What strategies did you use to cope with them? What other factors helped you in facing those challenges?

Each interview session will end with the interviewer reiterating the opening quote:

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day, that says I’ll try again tomorrow” Mary Anne Radmacher. (n.d.).

The purpose in reiterating this quote to close the interview session, is to gauge if there has been a shift in meaning, through the interview process, for the participant through the lens of persistence.

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