“I KNEW THE RIGHT PEOPLE”: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY OF THE RESILIENCE OF FIRST-GENERATION BLACK MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS

By

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To my participants:
I am forever grateful for your stories and your dedication.
May your words inspire generations of teachers and students as they have inspired me.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

BLACK	Black Americans of African descent and any Black Americans who do not identify as being of African descent, as well as Black Americans who are of Caribbean or Hispanic descent (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).
FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENT	A college student whose parents or guardians did not earn a baccalaureate degree (Choy, 2001)
HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOL	Public school where 76% to 100% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch (NCES, 2010)
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION (PWI)	A university or college where more than 50% of the student population is White
RESILIENCE	"A dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543)
SUCCESS	As this study focuses on exploring the students' perceptions of their own success, it is important to define the use of the term here to mean graduating from a high-poverty high school and being the first in their family to attend a highly competitive, predominantly White, four-year university.

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Research on the academic achievement of Black and White students in our nation's educational system reveals substantial evidence of differential patterns of achievement. Black students living in high-poverty neighborhoods are likely to face more barriers to academic success than other students from similar socio-economic groups, including lack of access to a high-quality education, school resources, and high-quality teachers. Black males face even more barriers, as they have a greater likelihood of being expelled, disciplined, or referred to special education than their peers. These risk factors, however, do not determine academic outcomes. Those who do succeed in the face of adversity are defined as resilient.

Research in the area of resilience has examined the individual characteristics of resilience, as well as the categories of relationships that support the development of resilience. However, there are only a limited number of studies on how the dynamic interaction of supportive relationships specifically supports the development of resilience in Black male students from high-poverty neighborhoods. This grounded theory study therefore examined the interaction of the factors that supported the resilience of six Black male college students, who despite the presence of additional risk

factors such as living in poverty and being the first in their families to attend a four-year university, demonstrated exceptional academic success. Grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis were used to examine their perspectives on the development of their resilience, with the goal of addressing the research question: What theory explains the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools?

Findings indicated that these students experienced three main categories of relationships in the development of their resilience: family support, school support, and external support. The interactions of these three categories included family members encouraging the development of personal relationships with their teachers, as well as a partnership between schools and a community program to provide mentoring. The interactions among these relationships are described and analyzed, and the study concludes with a discussion of the implications and areas for further research in order to support the development of resilience in Black males in high-poverty schools.

CHAPTER 1
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Research on the academic achievement of Black and White[1] students in our nation's educational system reveals substantial evidence of differential patterns. This is commonly referred to as the "achievement gap." Black students are likely to hold lower grade point averages and weaker aptitude test scores than White students, as well as lower rates of school readiness (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). Research has also demonstrated that Black students are more likely to drop out of high school and less likely to enroll in and graduate from college (Aud, et al., 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Osborne & Walker, 2006).

The research on Black males is even bleaker: they face a greater likelihood of being placed in special education, retained a grade, and suspended or expelled (Davis, 2003; Garibaldi, 1992; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Skiba, Homer, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011). Specifically, Levin (2008) claims that, “At almost every grade level, black males are about one standard deviation below the non-Hispanic, white student population in test measures of student achievement – about at the 16th percentile relative to the 50th percentile for the overall population” (p. 180). In addition, less than half (47 percent) of all Black male high school students graduated in four years from U.S. high schools in 2008, compared to 78 percent of White male students (Holzman, 2010).

[1] I use the terms “White” and “Black” deliberately, despite their problematic definitions. For the purposes of this study, students identified as “White” are identified as Caucasian and non-Hispanic, and students identified as “Black” are identified as Black Americans of African descent and any Black Americans who do not identify as being of African descent, as well as Black Americans who are of Caribbean or Hispanic descent (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

The long-lasting effects of these academic achievement gaps continue to warrant theoretical and empirical analysis, especially as educational attainment is positively correlated with one's socioeconomic status (Pallas, 2000). In other words, the continued existence of academic achievement gaps leads to the continued existence of racial inequality in general. Increasing the knowledge base therefore is crucial in order to reduce racial disparities within educational outcomes and within society as a whole.

As the achievement gap is directly related to income inequality, the increasing gap between rich and poor families is a cause for concern. Families whose income falls into the bottom 20th percentile saw a seven percent increase in their income between 1977 and 2007; families in the top 99th percentile saw a 90 percent increase (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Increasing residential segregation adds to this problem, as those with higher incomes are more likely to live in homogeneous, segregated neighborhoods with other families just like them, while those with lower incomes are much less likely to experience upward mobility or to move out of poor neighborhoods (Massey, 2007). Poor neighborhoods often have poor schools, due to the property tax funding of public schools, thus continuing the cycle of segregation. Poor neighborhoods also face a lack of literacy resources, with as many as 50 percent fewer bookstores or even 50 percent fewer books within school libraries (Neuman, 2013).

The contributing factors to this achievement gap also include the increased probability that Black students will live in these poor neighborhoods and therefore attend schools with fewer resources and more poorly qualified teachers than those attended by White students from similar socio-economic backgrounds (Aud, et al., 2010; Berliner, 2006; Hughes, Stenhjem, & Newkirk, 2007; Puma, et al., 1997; Tavernise, 2011). Black

students living in high-poverty neighborhoods in particular face more barriers to academic success than other students from similar socio-economic groups (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; King, 2005). These barriers often include lack of stable housing and health care, as well as lack of access to a high-quality education, as determined by availability of school resources and the quality of their teachers (Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hertz, 2005).

Black students from high-poverty neighborhoods are likely to attend neighborhood schools with fewer resources, higher concentrations of poor and minority students, lower quality teachers, and more student disciplinary actions (Hughes, Stenhjem, & Newkirk, 2007; Puma, et al., 1997). The lack of resources and lack of preparation to teach in these environments also drive many of the best teachers away from high-poverty schools. Teachers are 50 percent more likely to leave schools with higher poverty levels and higher concentrations of minorities than they are to leave schools with lower levels of minority students living in poverty (Ingersoll, 2001; Scafidi, Sjoquist, & Stinebrickner, 2007).

High-poverty schools serving non-White students are more likely to employ inexperienced teachers (Shields, Humphrey, Wechsler, Riel, Tiffany-Morales, & Woodworth, 2001). This lack of experience and preparation specifically for working with a high-poverty population is revealed in the teachers' pedagogy and their interactions with their students. This fact alone contributes significantly to the achievement gap, as certified teachers, particularly those who have taught for two years or more, have been found to be significantly more effective at narrowing the achievement gap than

uncertified teachers (Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Easton-Brooks & Davis, 2009). The demographic and cultural divide between predominately White female teachers and Black male students can also contribute to the likelihood that Black male students will drop out or be referred for behavior infractions (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Skiba, Homer, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011; Noguera, 2009).

Despite these barriers to achievement, certain Black male students from high-poverty backgrounds still achieve academic success. These students have developed resilience, a term which for the purposes of this study will be defined as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). Bonnie Benard (1991) created possibly the most well-known framework of resilience, which includes both individual characteristics and external protective factors that contribute to the nurturing of resilience. Those who are defined as resilient within this framework demonstrate the presence of the following individual characteristics:

- Social competence (responsiveness, cultural flexibility, empathy, caring, communication skills, and a sense of humor);
- Problem-solving (planning, help-seeking, critical and creative thinking);
- Autonomy (sense of identity, self-efficacy, self-awareness, task-mastery, and adaptive distancing from negative messages and conditions);
- A sense of purpose and belief in a bright future (goal direction, educational aspirations, optimism, faith, and spiritual connectedness)

These individual characteristics, however, do not tell the whole story of the development of resilience. They are the manifestations of resilience or the outcomes demonstrating that one's capacity for resilience is engaged (Benard, 2004). How do students develop these characteristics? In summarizing resilience research, Benard (1991) also created a framework of three categories of protective factors that support

the development of resilience: caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution (Benard, 1991). These categories are examined in isolation, however, and these supportive factors do not operate in isolation. Their interaction can be much more powerful if studied as such (Garmezy, 1991; Luthar, Doernberger, & Zigler, 1993). This study addresses that need and also focuses on a specific group who is more likely to face significant risk factors: Black males.

One of the purposes of resilience research is to enhance understanding of the resilience process in order to increase the resilience of at-risk students. In order to accomplish this, many researchers have specifically examined at-risk racial subpopulations in order to identify their differences and similarities in developing resilience (e.g. Ford, 1996; Gandara, 1995; Gardynik & McDonald, 2005; Gibson, 1996; Milstein & Henry, 2000; Morales, 2000; Myers & Taylor, 1998). In examining racial differences in resilience, researchers have found that resilient Black students reported having supportive relationships with teachers, parents, or other mentors, and having a sense of self-efficacy, which is identified as a crucial factor in developing resilience (Borman & Overman, 2004; Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Morales, 2008; Morales, 2010; Peck, Roeser, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2008; Wasonga, Christman, & Kilmer, 2003). Only one of those studies examines how the dynamic interaction of relationships specifically supports the development of the resilience of minority students from high-poverty neighborhoods (Morales, 2010). The participants of that study were Black and Hispanic males and females. In fact, 31 of the participants were female, and 19 were male. Given the specific barriers to academic success that Black males face, as well as

the reality that Black males, regardless of class status, lag behind Black female students in achievement scores and graduation rates, a narrower population sample was appropriate for this study (Harper, 2012; Hubbard, 1999; Roach, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to generate a theory describing the resilience of first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were attending a large, public, predominantly White university in the southern United States. One question emerged from that purpose: What theory explains the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools?

This research question was addressed in a social constructivist, grounded theory study, based in interviews with six first-generation Black male college students. This study focused on how a specific group of resilient Black students became successful as demonstrated by graduating from a high-poverty high school and being the first in their family to attend a highly competitive, four-year university. Learning more about the factors these students believed supported them in getting ready for and into college, and more importantly, about the interaction of those factors, provided a framework for understanding how to support other Black male students in developing resilience.

Since I was specifically interested in the perspectives of students who can be defined as “resilient”, the selection criteria of being a first-generation college student and graduating from a high-poverty high school was important. For instance, students whose parents earned a bachelor’s degree or more are almost 30 percent more likely to graduate from a four-year university than students whose parents never went to college (Radford, Berkner, Wheeless, & Shepherd, 2010). The chances of graduating from high

school, let alone attending college, are also much lower for those who attend a high school where more than 75% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. On average, 68 percent of 12th grade students in high-poverty high schools graduated with a diploma in 2007-2008, compared to 91 percent of students from schools with less than 25 percent of their students eligible for free or reduced lunch (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

As these figures suggest, Black first-generation male college students, who graduated from high-poverty high schools, and were attending a highly competitive Predominantly White Institution (PWI), may be defined as resilient. By exploring their perspectives on their own resilience, this study discovered more ways to scaffold and empower Black youth to disrupt the trend reflected in these statistics.

Significance of the Study

In addition to the gap in the literature described above (the lack of focus on the dynamic interaction of relationships in developing resilience in Black males), many resilience studies are based on surveys and quantitative data, which do not capture the specific stories of these students. The quantitative studies provide little insight into how students developed the characteristic of self-efficacy, or exactly what supportive relationships look like; therefore, qualitative methods were used in the current study in order to examine important discourses and nuances of participants' meanings that might be less visible in large-scale studies (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009). A focus on processes that promote resiliency, rather than the individual characteristics of resilient students, reflects a current trend in resiliency research (Davey, Eaker & Walters, 2003). As Benard (2004) explains:

> We must work together to weave a fabric of resilience that connects not just young people to their families, schools, and communities but one that connects families to schools and communities, and schools and communities to each other. (p. 109)

Examining the process of the development of resilience through the stories of these participants revealed how these protective relationships interacted and intersected in order to scaffold the development of resilience for future Black male students. This also addresses the clear need for qualitative resilience studies that allow participants to share their stories in greater depth and for theory that originates from those stories, focusing on the mechanisms by which the interactions among these supportive factors keep vulnerable youth on-track educationally (Peck, et al., 2008).

This study is also necessary due to the lack of Black student voices in the literature. Instead of continuing to identify the struggles which Black students face, this study contributes to an emerging body of research on Black student perspectives about how to support their own academic success. The focus on Black male students specifically does not suggest that race is in any way a determinant in academic achievement, but instead acknowledges that identifying as a Black male, specifically from a high-poverty neighborhood, does increase one's chances of being labeled an at-risk student (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 1999; Skiba, Homer, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011; Warikoo & Carter, 2009).

If one is interested in the varied factors that enable Black male students to be resilient in the face of adversity, one must examine the perspectives of these students directly. While we know a good amount about the factors that prevent Black male students from academic success, much less is known about the perspectives of successful Black male students or their beliefs about the factors that contributed to their

success. Most importantly, focusing on the success of resilient students can be “an effective and underutilized means of mitigating the achievement gap” (Morales, 2010, p. 164). This qualitative, interview-based study contributes to the literature by creating a theory of resilience from the words of the students themselves and looks to the source for a better solution that leads to academic success for all students, especially for those who face significant risk factors.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to generate a theory explaining the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools, who were attending a large, public, predominately White university in the southern United States. For the purposes of this study, resilience is defined as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). This study focuses in particular on the factors that provide support for academic success, as described by the participants. This is relevant for Black students who graduated from high-poverty high schools, as the literature shows that Black students in particular face more barriers to academic success than other students from similar socio-economic groups (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; King, 2005). In analyzing the factors surrounding the achievement gap, most studies can be classified as either focusing on the failure of schools to close the gap between Black and White students, or on the success of certain students in overcoming this gap.

To build a foundation for understanding the importance of this study, this chapter synthesizes literature in two areas: the empirical and theoretical literature related to barriers to academic success for this particular group of students and the empirical literature related to resilience, specifically the supportive factors found to explain the resilience of Black students from high-poverty schools or low-SES families.

Barriers to Academic Success

This section will analyze the literature on specific barriers to academic success for Black students, specifically group characteristics such as poverty level correlated to race, and school characteristics correlated to poverty level and race. The literature was reviewed using the following criteria for inclusion: (1) empirical studies and theoretical articles that were published within the last 20 years; (2) empirical studies that directly examined barriers to academic success for Black students from high-poverty schools or low-SES families; and (3) theoretical articles that examined the central theories that have been used to explain the barriers to academic success for Black students from high-poverty schools or low-SES families.

Poverty and Race

The financial and academic disparity between students from high-poverty and low-poverty schools is one of the clear barriers to academic success for Black students from high-poverty schools. This disparity can be examined through the factors of inequitable housing and health care, as students in high-poverty schools are likely to lack stable housing and stable health care, and many of those students are Black. According to the 2010 United States Census, 27.4 percent of Blacks currently living in America are living in poverty, defined as earning $11,139 or less for an individual in 2010 (Tavernise, 2011). Additional disparities in net worth also affect Black students' chances of living in poverty, as a recent report by the Pew Research Center revealed that "…the typical Black household had just $5,677 in wealth (assets minus debts) in 2009; the typical Hispanic household had $6,325 in wealth; and the typical white household had <u>$113,149</u> [emphasis added]" (Taylor, Fry, & Kochhar, 2011). Economic mobility is also often impacted by race. The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)

revealed that 42% of Blacks born in the bottom tenth of the income distribution remained in that same income bracket as adults, while only 17% of Whites exemplified this same pattern. This pattern of remaining at the bottom for Blacks persisted across generations (Hertz, 2005). Living in poverty negatively affects students in multiple and often layered ways. Two that have pronounced impact are housing and health care.

Housing

As a large number of Black children are born into poverty or will experience poverty during childhood, the ability of these students to better their situation economically is limited by the poverty of their neighborhood and their families. A lack of academic opportunities usually results in a minimum-wage job for many students living in poverty. Black men are more likely to work a minimum-wage job than White men; in 2011, Black men employed full time earned an average of $653 per week, which is only 76.3 percent of the average salary earned by White men (United States Department of Labor, 2012).

Working a minimum-wage job prevents economic mobility for many families, and also prevents the ability to secure stable housing. Currently, there is not a single state in the country where a minimum-wage worker can afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). Section 8 housing vouchers, while intended to provide safe and sanitary housing for low-income families, are only used by a fraction of the families eligible for them, despite recent studies linking improved educational outcomes to their use (Carlson, et al., 2011; Rothstein, 2002). In her 2001 book *Nickel and Dimed*, journalist Barbara Ehrenreich attempted to support herself on several minimum-wage jobs, such as waiting tables or working at Wal-Mart. Despite the advantages of her race, education, good health, a car, a laptop, and $1000 in start-up funds, Ehrenreich was

only able to fully cover her month's expenses *once* over the course of two years of working minimum-wage jobs in three different states.

Inequitable housing opportunities may also be a result not only of wage inequities, but also of direct governmental influence in the form of a Federal Housing Authority mandated practice started in the 1930s called “redlining”: a discriminatory insurance and bank practice which involved refusing to insure specific neighborhoods, or give loans of any kind to individuals or businesses in those neighborhoods, due to poverty levels or racial demographics. These neighborhoods were outlined in red on “residential security maps” required to be used by the banks and insurance companies in order to have their loans federally backed.

Millicent Cox, a San Diego economist and demographer, used federally created redlining maps from the 1930s in conjunction with current census data to compare two San Diego neighborhoods. On the redlining map, the Mission Hills neighborhood was rated “A”, where the most favorable home loans were encouraged, and the Logan Heights neighborhood was rated “D” (the lowest level). Residents there were prevented from obtaining home loans. The 1990 and 2000 recent census data revealed that the Mission Hills neighborhood still remained above the 95th percentile in San Diego County in median home value, and in the 99th percentile for population classified as White. The poorer Logan Heights “redlined” neighborhood, however, remained below the fifth percentile in home value, with only three percent of the population classified as White, and less than one quarter the rate of home ownership. The practice of redlining, though now illegal, is still impacting the distribution of wealth in San Diego today (Tooby, 2007).

There is also a lack of government funds to fully support housing needs. The Section 8 housing voucher program serves 2.1 million households that contain more than 5.2 million individuals, yet it cannot cover the needs of all families living in poverty. The primary objective of the program is to assist "very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market." (U.S. Department of Housing, 2010, p. 1). By receiving Section 8 vouchers, families would be eligible for income-based rent, which would give them the opportunity to live in clean, affordable, and steady housing. Not having to worry about housing would free parents to worry about other issues, and possibly give them more time to spend helping with their children's educational and social needs.

Several features of Section 8 voucher receipt are likely to lead to improved educational outcomes for the children of recipient families, according to a 2011 study of the costs and benefits associated with Section 8 housing in Wisconsin. Carlson, et al. (2011) found that because of program-induced changes in the neighborhoods, children of voucher recipients were likely to attend better schools and receive more child care services, both of which were likely to increase child achievement. Finally, voucher receipt resulted in increased family income, which has been found to improve educational outcomes overall.

Health Care

Another factor impacting the achievement of students living in poverty is health care. Low-income families are unable to provide some of the things that their middle-income neighbors see as necessities, such as regular check-ups. When children are sick, they cannot learn. Their parents are also without care, and this can impede their efforts to provide basic needs for their children. Health care is a tremendous need for

low-income families, and if better programs existed, many academic problems could be resolved. Having regular checkups, including dental and vision, could potentially correct some problems that could quickly become serious. More persistent issues, such as attention problems or depression, could also be treated (Rothstein, 2002). Students whose parents do not have health insurance are likely to face health problems, and Black children are more likely to be uninsured; 1 in 9 are currently uninsured (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). A lack of health insurance prevents students from having regular check-ups and leads to parents using the emergency room to treat illnesses like colds and flu. Black students can face health care issues from birth, as infants born to Black mothers are twice as likely to be born at low birthweight as infants born to White mothers (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). The risk of a child being lead poisoned, developing asthma, having emergency asthma events, or being injured or disabled is higher if one is low-income, minority, and living in poor housing (Cubbin & Smith 2002; Hynes, 2012).

Children who struggle with health problems are more likely to struggle in school, especially in the areas of motivation and ability to learn (Basch, 2011). Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, and Chen (2012) found that the Black third-grade male students in their study who were maltreated, exposed to high amounts of lead in their homes or schools, or had mothers with inadequate prenatal care demonstrated lower reading achievement scores. They also found that the Black students in their study were 3.6 times more likely than the White students to experience the highest level of risk factors mentioned above.

Schooling and Race

The probability of Black students living in poverty directly affects their academic achievement. Black children who live in a neighborhood with a high poverty rate have an average learning loss equivalent to a full year of school and high school graduation rates that are as much as 20 percentage points lower than those in wealthier communities (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). More often than not, poor and minority students are placed in schools that have fewer resources, have higher concentrations of poor and minority students, have lower quality teachers, and have more student disciplinary actions (Hughes, Stenhjem & Newkirk, 2007; Puma, et al., 1997).

Lack of resources due to property segregation

The schools serving the highest concentration of Black students are likely to be large urban schools, which are often characterized by high-poverty, high-minority populations. Despite the promise of Brown vs. Board of Education, most large urban school districts today remain segregated. In fact, the white population in the public schools of Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, and St. Louis was at 15% or less in the 2007-2008 academic year (McNeal, 2009). This can be traced back to the inequitable practice of redlining previously mentioned in the housing section, as well as the practice of "White flight" that occurred during the 1960s, in which White families relocated to suburban districts in order to avoid the desegregation of schools (Clotfelter, 1999, 2004; Diamond, Ledwith, & Clark, 2007; Logan et al., 2008). This practice still continues as recent studies on parental choice have observed that White families are more concerned about the presence of poor minority students in urban public schools, and are more likely to choose suburban or private schools for their own

children due to this fact (Clotfelter, 2004; Reber, 2005; Jego & Roehner, 2006; Ledwith & Clark, 2007; Logan et al., 2008; Zhang, 2008).

This segregation is then reflected in the inequitable distribution of school resources. A lower tax revenue base in urban areas means a decline in funding for the neighborhood schools (Anyon, 2005). Most schools in cities now receive far less money per student than their counterparts in more affluent neighborhoods. Less money in the schools means less money to pay the most experienced teachers, less access to costly but effective curricular materials and other resources, and fewer day-to-day necessities, like copy paper and textbooks. These schools usually have larger class sizes and are forced to use a basal curriculum with emphasis on drill and memorization, which is an effort to increase test scores without teaching critical thinking skills (Banks, Cochran-Smith & Moll, 2005). In order for the high-poverty students to make the gains their peers are making, they need extra money. Instead, most face an extreme lack of funds, exemplified by the over $2,000 shortfall per student in New York (Books, 2007). According to the Children’s Defense Fund (2012), 16 states have “regressive” school funding systems, which means that high-poverty school districts have less state and local revenue. The disparity in funds between low-poverty and high-poverty schools is also connected to the fact that low-income parents in high-poverty schools often do not have the ability to lobby more effectively for extra programs, computers, library materials, etc., or the ability to inspect, and complain about the neglect of, the school building itself, or about the quality of their child’s teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Teacher quality and the cultural divide

Teacher quality has been measured in many different ways, but most reveal a disparity in teacher quality based on the poverty level and minority population level of

the school. High-poverty schools face another roadblock due to lack of resources when it comes to hiring high-quality teachers. According to a study of the 50 largest California school districts, high-poverty schools spent an average of $2,576 less on teacher salaries than the low-poverty schools within the same district (NCES, 2004). Teacher quality as measured by the “highly qualified” provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act also differs based on school poverty level: for example, in the 2003-2004 school year, 9.1 percent of all teachers in Maryland were considered not highly qualified, while 20.2 percent of teachers in Maryland’s high-poverty schools were considered not highly qualified (‘High Quality’ Disparities, 2005).

Teachers are also much more likely to leave schools with higher poverty levels and higher concentrations of minorities (Scafidi, Sjoquist & Stinebrickner, 2007). Teacher turnover is 50 percent higher in high-poverty than in low-poverty schools (Ingersoll, 2001), and urban teachers are much more likely to leave or transfer than their suburban counterparts (Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 1999). Shields et al., (2001) estimated that inexperienced teachers in California are assigned almost exclusively to low-income schools serving students of color. This lack of experience and preparation specifically for working with a high-poverty population is revealed in the teachers’ pedagogy and in their non-instructional interactions with their students.

The literature suggests that the cultural divide between White teachers and Black students can directly affect teacher-student relationships. Black students who have a hostile relationship with their teachers due to perceived racial discrimination may have lower levels of classroom engagement (Brown, 2008; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007). Black students who do not find support from their teachers due to this

cultural discontinuity, and especially those who are also acting as parents to their younger siblings or helping their parents out financially, are at increased risk of poor academic achievement, often attributed to absences or lack of focus when at school (Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001).

Some of the perceived discrimination could possibly come from the fact that many teachers are not aware that their style of instruction is heavily influenced by their own culture, which may run counter to their students' culture and prevent the student from learning. Teachers often have "limited interracial and intercultural experience, with erroneous assumptions about diverse youngsters, and with limited expectations for the success of all learners" (Melnick & Zeichner, 1998, p. 89). These limited experiences often serve to create an achievement system based on how similar a student's behavior is to the teacher's behavior (Nieto, 1999; Webb-Johnson, 2002). Students who are seen as different or whose interactions are different from those valued by the teacher are often seen as discipline problems.

Discipline policies

Students are more likely to drop out of high school if they feel disconnected from their school community, and Black boys are almost three times as likely as the general school-age population to receive exclusionary forms of discipline leading to a sense of disconnection, such as suspension (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Townsend, 2000). Recently, the Montgomery County, Maryland school district found that in 2010, "71 percent of suspensions for insubordination, a relatively rare offense in the county, were handed out to Black students" despite the fact that Black students make up only 21 percent of their school population (St. George, 2011). This study contributes to over 30 years of research on racial and socioeconomic disparities in the use of out-of-school

suspension and expulsion (Skiba et al., 2011). In 2002, Black students were almost three times more likely than White students to be suspended (Wald & Losen, 2003), and in a more recent study in a Virginia middle school, Black students received five times as many suspensions as White students (Shirley & Cornell, 2012).

This may be related to teacher quality as well, as Gregory and Weinstein (2008) found that Black high school students were more likely to be perceived as defiant and less cooperative by teachers whom they perceived as unfair or untrustworthy. In that study, referrals were collected from a period of over a year from an urban high school and analyzed for their reasons of referral. Black students made up 30% of the school enrollment and 58% of the defiance referrals. In addition, 86% of the defiance-referred Black students received defiance referrals from only one to three adults, which means that the quality of most Black students' interactions seemed to vary across different adults in school (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008).

A related barrier is that Black students are more likely to have conflicts with their teachers than White students, especially when their teacher is of a different race or ethnicity (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Saft & Pianta 2001). While minority groups are quickly becoming majority groups in public schools, the teacher workforce remains mostly White middle-class women (Dewan, 2010; Banks, et al., 2005). This cultural divide can perpetuate a hostile teacher-student relationship and may contribute to lower levels of classroom engagement (Brown, 2008; Smalls, et al., 2007).

With this unequal distribution of discipline occurring, many Black students begin to feel that school is not a safe place for them, and certainly not a supportive one. As school behavior issues can be a predictor for future criminal activity, it is not surprising

that the prison population also reflects this disparity: In 2003, Black youth were only 16% of the nation's overall juvenile population, but 45% of the total number of juvenile arrests (Snyder, 2005). According to the Children's Defense Fund (2012), 84% of those sentenced to life without parole as juveniles had also been suspended or expelled at some point in their academic career. Researchers suggest that if these discipline disparities were addressed and Black students began to feel more connected to their schools, they would be more likely to have higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance, and stay in school longer (Klem & Connell, 2004).

It is easy to see how descriptions of "poor" or "failing" schools often paint pictures of schools filled with Black students. This leads many to conflate the two factors, and to claim that poverty alone is to blame for the achievement gap. However, in a 2004 study sponsored by The College Board to investigate the connection between school effects and SAT scores, one of their key conclusions was that even "after adjustment for the socioeconomic background, academic achievement, and extracurricular activities latent variables, the African American students—both males and females—continue to score lower on SAT–V [Verbal] and SAT–M [Math] than would be expected" (Everson & Millsap, 2004). In a study based on math achievement, Byrnes (2003) found that even in a majority-White school with a middle-to-high-SES population (79% White and 13% Black students), 26% of White students scored at or above the 80th percentile on the math NAEP, while only 7% of Black students did. These students came from similar SES backgrounds, and among those who did score at or above the 80th percentile, both White and Black students reported having parents who graduated from college, positive perceptions of their own ability in math, and positive views of math in general.

As the literature examined above reveals, a student who is Black, attends a high-poverty school, and whose parents did not earn a baccalaureate degree, is much less likely to attend or graduate from a four-year college than a student who does not fit these descriptions (Mortenson, 1993; NCES, 2010; Radford, Berkner, Wheeless, & Shepherd, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Therefore, students who fit those descriptors and are currently attending a four-year college can be seen as resilient.

Resilience

The purpose of this research is to generate a theory to explain the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools who are currently attending a large, public, predominately White university in the southern United States. Students who succeed in the face of significant challenges are often said to be "resilient". Resilience is defined as "a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543).

Resilience research examines structures that support student achievement through developing a thorough understanding of the success of students who have "beaten the odds", rather than focusing on understanding the factors that contributed to the failure of those who fall victim to the achievement gap (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005; Milstein & Henry, 2000). However, a clear explanation of *how* students can beat these odds, or of what the supportive factors are in developing that resilience, is still missing from a good portion of educational research. A focus on supportive factors, rather than characteristics of students identified as resilient, reflects the current trends in resiliency research, as Davey, Eaker, and Walters (2003) wrote, "it is important to note that the

emphasis in resiliency research has shifted from identifying characteristics of children who are resilient to *identifying processes* that promote resiliency" (p. 347). The resilience literature was therefore reviewed using the following criteria for inclusion: (1) empirical studies that were published in a peer-reviewed journal, agency report, or book with a strong description of methodology; (2) empirical studies and books that were published within the last 10 years; and (3) empirical studies and books that directly examined supportive factors found to explain the resilience of Black adolescent students from high-poverty schools or low-SES families.

After searching multiple databases for studies that fit these criteria, I narrowed the field to 7 empirical studies and 1 literature review of empirical studies, which are outlined in the attached chart. Of those empirical studies, 4 used quantitative methods, 2 used qualitative methods, and 1 was a mixed-methods study. The participants ranged in age from third grade to college undergraduates (the third-grade students were part of a longitudinal study that also monitored those same students at the sixth grade level), but all had parents with household incomes below the poverty line, and each study focused specifically on Black students defined as resilient. Data sources across the studies included questionnaires, standardized achievement scores, and interviews.

From this literature, it appears that Black students who are resilient were scaffolded by supportive home relationships and supportive school relationships, both of which led to the individual characteristic of self-efficacy. Supportive home relationships were broken down into the categories of high parental monitoring/expectations and parental work history/work ethic. Supportive school relationships were broken down into

the categories of caring school personnel (other than teachers) and positive teacher-student relationships.

Supportive Home Relationships

For Black students, the literature suggested that significant support for academic achievement began in the home. These studies suggested that high parental monitoring and expectations, along with the importance of a parent's work history and work ethic, were among the most important supportive factors contributing to the resilience of low-SES Black students.

High parental monitoring and expectations

Cunningham & Swanson (2010) surveyed 206 Black high school students to determine factors that facilitate educational resilience. Among the factors of parental monitoring, perceived school support, academic self-esteem, and future expectations, the factor of academic self-esteem ("feeling competent, optimistic, and valued" [p. 484]) was seen as most statistically significant, but the factor that contributed most clearly to developing that academic self-esteem was high parental monitoring. High parental monitoring was indicated by positive answers to statements such as "I have to keep the house clean" or "My parents hassle me about who I talk to on the telephone".

Support for the importance of parental monitoring comes from a study by Morales (2010). In his interview-based phenomenological study of 30 Black college undergraduates, Morales found two protective factor clusters worked in an interrelated fashion to mitigate the negative effects of risk factors and enable the development of resilience. The first cluster focused on the mentoring of school personnel; the second included the protective factors of high parental expectations supported by words and actions (reported by 80% of the participants) and the mother modeling a strong work

ethic (reported by 74% of the participants). These high expectations did not describe the parents' general commentary on academic achievement, but instead the assertions made about and the commitments made to their educational goals and ambitions, especially when students could see their parents following through on those commitments. Participants reported that parents made sacrifices such as getting them out of local, low-achieving schools, which required financial and transportation sacrifices on the parents' part.

Wasonga, Christman, and Kilmer (2003) conducted a questionnaire-based study of 480 ninth- and twelfth-grade students. They found that a model with two variables explained 53.3% of the variance predicting resilience for Black students: home meaningful participation and home high expectations. While peer relationships were actually negatively related to academic achievement for Black students, home high expectations were positively and significantly related to academic achievement.

Parental work history and work ethic

Cunningham and Swanson (2010) found a positive correlation between the mother's work history and the development of academic self-esteem, which the authors attributed to the development of a home environment where education is valued and is part of the students' socialization experiences. This is particularly interesting considering that only 43.6% of the mothers in the study had completed high school or some college, possibly leading to the conclusion that parental education level may be less important than parental attitude toward education and work ethic. Morales (2010) also found that the factor of the participants' mothers modeling a strong work ethic contributed to the resilience of 74% of the participants.

Conversely, having parents who expected their children to fulfill caretaker responsibilities actually created a barrier to academic achievement for the 31 female Black college students in Morales' (2008) interview-based phenomenological study. The caretaker expectations and responsibilities faced by 77% of the females in that study forced them to either do more in order to fulfill those responsibilities as well as their academic requirements, or to withdraw emotionally from their family members by dismissing those caretaker responsibilities. The females in this study found the support that they were lacking at home from caring school personnel at the K-12 and college level, another factor that scaffolds resilience.

Supportive School Relationships

While home relationships are certainly important in building the foundation for resilience, the literature suggests that school relationships can be just as important, and in some cases, can fill in the gap when students do not have a strong relationship with their family members. Two groups of school personnel who can provide that support are teachers and non-instructional personnel like coaches or school club advisors.

Caring school personnel

In the above-mentioned Morales (2008) study, the most significant protective factor in developing resilience for the 50 college undergraduates was the presence of caring school personnel, defined as "any adult who takes a particular interest in the participants and helps guide them in a way that contributes significantly to their academic achievement" (p. 207). In Morales' (2010) study, caring school personnel in the K-12 school years specifically were a protective factor for 90% of the participants. One interesting factor related to the gender of these mentors was revealed in Morales' (2008) study, where he determined that having mentors of the same gender was

significantly positive for males, and that in fact, 87% of the mentors for the male students were male as well. The gender of the mentor was not as significant for the female students in the study, who reported having both male and female mentors.

In Peck et al.'s (2008) study of the extracurricular activity of 520 students, 60% of whom were Black, they found that 83% of students who were characterized as having educationally vulnerable lifespace configurations (based on the presence of self-reported personal and social risk factors), but were also engaged in school clubs and sports teams, went on to college, indicating that engagement in a school-personnel-led activity was a protective factor contributing to their resilience. They hypothesized that these activities were characterized by mentorship in the area of positive social norms and opportunities for skill building (Eccles & Gootman, 2002, as cited in Peck et al., 2008). The school support described as an essential protective factor in developing resilience in Cunningham and Swanson's (2010) study was defined as support from club/sports coaches, administrators, or teachers, and they elaborated that school was seen as a haven for students undergoing stressful events outside school, especially if they could see school as a place where they could develop and display competence.

Positive teacher-student relationships

Borman and Overman's (2004) longitudinal study of 925 students from third grade to sixth grade found that the resilience of low-SES minority (defined as Black or Latino) students was more dependent on attending an effective school (where learning time is maximized, student learning is monitored, clear school goals are created and maintained, and principal leadership is strong) than was the resilience of low-SES White students. Within that description of an effective school, positive teacher-student relationships and a safe and orderly school environment were the two factors most

significantly related to academic resilience. Low-SES Black students were much less likely to attend a school with these characteristics, however, than were low-SES White students.

Even for students who did not attend effective schools, having an individual positive relationship with a teacher has been demonstrated to make the difference in terms of academic achievement. In Boykin and Noguera's (2011) evidence-based framework of research on the achievement gap, they reviewed empirical studies on practices implemented in an attempt to narrow the achievement gap. One of the key findings in the studies that they reviewed was that teachers can support students in developing two methods of closing the achievement gap: adaptive learning postures (beliefs about academic tasks that will probably support academic achievement) and asset-focused strategies (learning exchanges that build on student assets or skills instead of punishing learners for not knowing the material). One example of an adaptive learning posture is the development of self-regulated learning skills such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement. In one study they cited, Black low-SES students who received explicit training in these skills increased reading achievement more than those who did not (Mason, 2004). Teachers also can provide supportive factors in developing student resilience through instruction on incremental ability beliefs, or the belief that ability is not fixed, but malleable. Boykin and Noguera (2011) reported that in the studies they reviewed, students who believed that their academic performance was tied to fixed ability lost motivation over time in achievement settings, especially when faced with challenging tasks. Teachers therefore can convince students

of their own power to change their own perceived intelligence level, to transcend any perceived limitations, and to constantly improve, even in areas of perceived weakness.

The positive teacher-student relationships described in Morales' (2010) study also enabled the development of the other protective factors in that cluster, including a willingness to "class jump" or move up in social class, a sense of obligation to one's race, and a strong future orientation. These mentors served as "cultural translators, literally and figuratively translating the academic language into words and ideas that the students could understand readily" (p. 168), as well as convincing the students that success would not mean betraying one's race but instead would allow them to be in a position to support their own communities.

Individual Characteristics

While qualitative studies do not attempt to determine causality, it is nonetheless a question for debate whether students develop resilience because they are naturally self-efficacious, or whether resilient students are then nurtured in developing a sense of self-efficacy. Five of the seven studies investigated this debate.

Self-efficacy

Boykin and Noguera define self-efficacy as "the confidence that one can accomplish a desired outcome in a given context if the requisite application of skill is put forth" (p. 52), and in their review of the literature related to practices designed to narrow the achievement gap, they establish it as a key factor in supporting the development of resilience. They argue that self-efficacy is even more important than the general concept of self-esteem. Borman and Overman (2004) found that the presence of self-efficacy was a distinguishing factor between resilient and non-resilient students. As previously examined in Boykin and Noguera's (2011) description of the value of

adaptive learning postures in their review of the literature, teachers can play a role in helping students develop self-efficacy. However, the literature reviewed here shows a connection between supportive home factors and supportive school factors and the development of self-efficacy. Boykin and Noguera suggest in their review of the literature that students derive their self-efficacy from encounters with key information sources such as past performance, observations of others' performance, social influence, and one's psychological reaction to the encounter (anxiety vs. relaxation). This matches with the findings of Morales' (2008) study, in which 93% of the resilient females in the study reported having specific post-college goals along with a realization of how what they were currently doing academically would help them reach those goals.

Work ethic

In Morales' (2010) study, observing the strong work ethic of one's mother enabled 74% of the participants to develop their own strong work ethic and by extension, their own sense of self-efficacy. Though the factors of work ethic, persistence, and internal locus of control were strong predictors of resilience independently, when all three were combined with the participants' perceptions of their family members' commitments and struggles, they became even more powerful predictors. One participant, Richard, described this perception in his story about his parents' struggle to pay his Catholic school tuition:

> My parents never complained to me about the tuition, but I knew it was an issue for them each month. They would always be discussing ways to make ends meet, and talking about how many hours my mom should work at a given time. Again, it wasn't complaining, they just had to figure it out. I knew they really thought that school was valuable, or they wouldn't have worried so much about making certain to make the tuition payments. (p. 170).

This realization of the hard work of one's parents (and especially one's mother) contributed significantly to the development of self-efficacy for many students in that study. As LaTisha explained, "When (my mom) got home from her job as a comfort and hospitality associate—fancy name for a hotel maid—she would start cleaning the house. Could you imagine that? Doing a sh— job all day, then doing it more when you got home? And not complaining. That's character. . . . When I hit a roadblock and start complaining, I just think about her, and I'm almost ashamed to be complaining" (Morales, 2010, p. 170). For Black students in Wasonga, et al.'s (2003) study, high parental expectations contributed to a development of resilience and of self-efficacy, as students were able to translate their parent(s)'s belief in them to a belief in their own academic abilities.

Conclusions

The review of the literature has demonstrated that there are significant barriers to academic success for Black students, especially those from a high-poverty school whose parents did not obtain a baccalaureate degree, thereby defining their attendance at a four-year college as an act of resilience. Within the literature on resilience, the presence of the following supportive factors was identified as crucial: supportive home relationships, in the categories of high parental monitoring/expectations and parental work history/work ethic, and supportive school relationships, in the categories of caring school personnel (other than teachers) and positive teacher-student relationships. Both of these factors led to the development of the crucial individual characteristic of self-efficacy.

While the resilience literature was reviewed extensively for this study, it is important to note that the literature is not extensive and that most of these studies draw

on national secondary data sets, rather than primary data. These studies (Borman & Overman, 2004; Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Peck, et al., 2008; Wasonga, et al., 2003) rely on surveys and self-report data, which makes it more difficult to ascertain which factors are most significant and what other extenuating factors may be impacting the results. Only two studies reviewed used qualitative methods and student interviews as data (Morales, 2008; Morales, 2010). The remaining source reviewed empirical studies on practices related to narrowing the achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). While this was an extensive and rigorous review that focused on the concept of resilience as it related to the achievement gap, its main focus was not to isolate the supportive factors in developing resilience, which limited its utility related to this investigation.

Another limitation of this body of literature is the isolation of major protective factors in the lives of resilient individuals. This tendency to simply isolate and identify individual characteristics in the development of resilience as independent variables limits the scope and applicability of this type of research, although it is one of the most commonly used formats in the resilience literature (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005; Garmenzy, 1991; Gordan, 1995; Von Seker, 2004). Supportive factors do not operate in isolation, and their interaction can be much more powerful if studied as such (Luthar, Doernberger, & Zigler, 1993). Only one study, however, focused on the interaction of key protective factors in developing resilience (Morales, 2010). The combinations and specific arrangements of protective factors that enhance resilience are much more salient, as it is this combination that is much more likely to support an at-risk student in developing resilience (Morales & Trotman, 2004). There is a clear need therefore for

qualitative resilience studies that allow participants to share their stories in greater depth and for theory that originates from those stories, focusing not on categorizing isolated resilience factors, but instead on the mechanisms by which the relationship of these supportive factors is central to keeping vulnerable youth on-track educationally (Peck, et al., 2008).

The goal of examining this body of literature has been to provide a detailed look at both what the barriers to success may be and how resilient Black students may overcome those barriers. However, as others have made clear, there is more work to be done. Specifically, "the absence of conceptual (and, by implication, methodological) precision impinges on our ability to interpret accurately how and why Black students fare in school as they do and to develop policy that will ameliorate racial gaps in achievement." (O'Connor, Lewis, & Mueller, 2007, p. 541). This body of literature is significant in that it identifies a few possible explanations for the achievement gap, and ways to counteract it, but the voices of those students who have defied that achievement gap are crucial in further research on how to support resilience for all Black students.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Black students in the United States are more likely to struggle with reading comprehension (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), are more likely to grow up in families living in poverty who have no post-secondary education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010; Tavernise, 2011; Taylor, Fry, & Kochhar, 2011; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996), and are more likely to receive exclusionary forms of school discipline (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Klem & Connell, 2004; St. George, 2011; Townsend, 2000). All of these factors negatively impact academic success, yet some students succeed despite these factors. Students who succeed academically under adverse conditions are often said to be “resilient” (Gayles, 2005; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Taylor, 2010; Wang & Gordon, 1994). This study focused on examining how a specific group of resilient Black male students became successful as demonstrated by graduating from a high-poverty high school and being the first in their family to attend a highly competitive, four-year university. Learning more about the factors these students believe supported them in getting ready for and into college provides a framework with the potential to help us understand how to support other Black students in developing resilience.

This study drew on data from interviews with college undergraduates to generate a theory describing the resilience of first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were attending a large, public, predominately White university in the southern United States. In order to thoroughly describe the factors that the students identify as important in scaffolding their motivation

and success, the study utilized qualitative methodology to highlight the voices of the participants.

This study is a good fit for the assumptions of qualitative research, such as "evolving design, the presentation of multiple realities, the researcher as an instrument of data collection, and a focus on participants' views" (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 45). The study used the qualitative methodology of grounded theory, which is used to create a substantive theory when current theories are inadequate or nonexistent (Creswell & Clark, 2007). An interview-based method was appropriate as the majority of current studies on the resilience of Black students are based on quantitative data such as surveys, which limit participants to a constrained set of statements that may or may not accurately reflect their realities. This study was grounded in the voices of the participants and provided insight into the many layers of this issue. The theoretical conceptualization that results from the analysis of the interview data in this study revealed "*patterns* of action and interaction between and among various types of social units, [as well as] reciprocal changes in patterns of action/interaction and in relationship with changes of conditions either internal or external to the process itself" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278).

This chapter presents a detailed description of research methods utilized in this study, including research questions, the theoretical framework, the setting for the research, and details about the participants and their selection. I then provide details on the data collection and data analysis methods used, as well as a discussion of the trustworthiness of this study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to generate a theory describing the resilience of first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were attending a large, public, PWI in the southern United States. One question emerged from that purpose: What theory explains the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools?

Theoretical Framework

This study was organized through the theoretical framework of social constructivism. The theoretical perspective of constructivism was a good fit for this study as it assumes that reality cannot be independent of the observers involved and instead describes individual human subjects engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them (Crotty, 1998). Our reality is often influenced by the groups to which we belong, either culturally or locally, and by the power structure under which we live. Therefore, I used a social constructivist framework, defined as the “collective generation and transmission of meaning” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58), to examine the factors that contributed to shaping each student’s identity.

This is not to be confused with a social *constructionist* framework, which focuses on how meanings are created through the social interactions of a group during the study itself. Social *constructivism* focuses on an individual's identity and how it is impacted by that individual’s interactions in a group or groups (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Crotty (1998) explains that the term constructivism is appropriate for “epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind” (p. 8). Social constructivism explains that these meanings are “varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a

few categories or ideas" (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 20). The meanings are not "simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives" (p. 21).

Grounded theory was a logical choice for this paradigm as it links knowledge closely with time and place. This theory "eschew[s] claims to idealistic versions of knowledge, leaving the way open for further development of our theories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 276). In this study, I do not seek a listing of the "five easy steps" to helping all Black students develop resilience. The purpose of the theory generated from these specific participants was to identify "*plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and *sets of concepts*" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278). In this case, the relationships of interest are among the factors that supported first-generation, Black male college students from high-poverty high schools in developing resilience. The constant comparative method of recursive analysis and data collection allowed for a deeper understanding of just how that process was experienced by these students (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

Participant Selection

First-Generation College Students

Census research suggests that family income level (Mortenson, 1993; Ottinger, 1991) and parental education (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) are positively correlated with educational success. First-generation college students are more likely to come from low-income families and, by definition, to have parents who either never attended college or who did not graduate from a four-year college. Because of these characteristics educational success at the secondary level, let alone at the post-secondary level, can be a struggle. For example, students whose parents earned a

bachelor's degree or more are almost 30 percent more likely to graduate from a four-year university than students whose parents never went to college (Radford, et al., 2010).

For the purposes of this study, I defined a first-generation college student as one whose parents or guardians did not earn a baccalaureate degree (Choy, 2001). Most research in this area has focused only on first-generation college students as a group, not non-White first-generation students specifically. This is an important area, however, as non-White first-generation students not only face "all the anxieties, dislocations, and difficulties of any college student", but they are often also faced with "substantial cultural as well as social and academic transitions" (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004, p. 250). For example, the graduation rate for white students starting at four-year institutions is 62.6 percent, compared to 40.5 percent for Black students and 41.5 percent for Hispanic students. These students are often less prepared for college due to poor secondary academic preparation, especially in the development of independent, critical thinking skills from high school (Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). They also tend to work more hours while in college, increasing the time it takes to complete their degrees (Zalaquett, 1999).

Black First-Generation College Students from High-Poverty High Schools

This study focused specifically on Black male first-generation college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were attending a PWI. It is important to note that the academic experience of Black students can differ greatly from that of majority White students in PWIs, even if both are classified as first-generation college students (Allen, 1999; Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000).

Since I am specifically interested in the perspectives of students who can be defined as “resilient”, the selection criterion of graduating from a high-poverty high school was important. The chances of graduating from high school, let alone attending college, are much lower for those who attend a high school where more than 75% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. On average, 68 percent of 12th grade students in high-poverty high schools graduated with a diploma in 2007-2008, compared to 91 percent at low-poverty schools. In the 1999-2000 school year, the number of graduating seniors from high-poverty high schools was 86 percent, so the chances of graduating from one of these schools has actually dropped over the last 8 years, and only 28 percent of those graduating seniors subsequently enrolled in a four-year institution (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

As these figures make clear, Black first-generation college students, who graduated from high-poverty high schools, and were attending a highly competitive PWI, can certainly be defined as resilient. By exploring their perspectives on their own resilience, I discovered more ways to narrow the achievement gap.

School Setting

The school where this research took place was a large, public, research university, which was a PWI. Admissions were very competitive, as more than 90 percent of incoming freshmen scored above the national average on standardized exams, and the average incoming freshman GPA was above a 4.0. The Fall 2011 entering class was less than 15% Black. Despite the comparatively small population of Black students, the university ranked near the top among Association of American Universities (an organization comprising the top 61 public and private research

universities in North America) public universities in bachelor's degrees awarded to Black students in 2008-09.

The demographic data for this university is not representative of the sample for this study, and this is deliberate. The students who took part in this study were in the minority: that is, they were students who were able to enter into and succeed in an academic environment that was off-limits for most of their peers. I hoped to illuminate their secrets of success, as it were: who or what supported them in their achievements as members of a group significantly under-represented in institutions of this type?

Sample Selection

The participants in this study were six Black first-generation male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools in Florida and who were currently attending a large, public, highly selective PWI in the southern United States. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22. Purposeful sampling was used to yield a participant pool able to provide information-rich cases for in-depth understanding (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Patton, 2001). The participants were nominated by representatives from two scholarship programs that support Black students from high-poverty high schools, as well as recruited from campus Black student organizations. This method of "community nomination", in which participants are recruited through direct contact with the targeted community, enables the researcher to gain an understanding of that community by allowing these groups to suggest students who might be a good fit for the study, or for students within those groups to nominate themselves (Foster, 1997). The scholarship program coordinators nominated three students based on the criteria of identifying as a Black male first-generation college student who graduated from a high-poverty high school in Florida, and four students self-nominated after receiving a

recruitment email. One student ultimately dropped out of the study after signing the informed consent form but before scheduling an interview due to family issues, leaving six total participants. Each of the students attended a high-poverty high school in Florida, and five of the six participants attended high school in urban areas.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process is difficult, if not impossible, to separate from the data analysis process in traditional grounded theory, due to the importance of the constant comparative process that is central to the tenets of grounded theory. The constant comparative method is a way of generating and suggesting many properties about a specific phenomenon, including causes, conditions, and consequences, while in the process of collecting and analyzing data (Glaser, 1965). The constant comparative method consists of four stages: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each theme that emerges from the data; (2) integrating themes and their properties; (3) delimiting the theory; and (4) writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). During constant comparison, “previously coded text is checked to see whether newly created codes are relevant for developing and refining theoretical categories or central concepts” (Bowen, 2008, p. 139). Keeping that in mind, most grounded theory studies follow the following steps:

- The researcher recruits multiple individuals who have participated in the process about the central phenomenon.
- The researcher identifies a homogeneous, theory-based purposeful sample with criteria for inclusion. This initial sample allows for detailed descriptions of a range of participants’ views and actions, should be flexible enough to reveal changes over time, and should reveal multiple views of the participants’ range of actions (Charmaz, 2006).
- The researcher attempts to establish rapport with participants before asking for informed consent.

- The researcher interviews at least 10 people for maximum detail. However, the initial sample may include as few as 4 people.
- Data sources include interviews and researcher memo-writing (writing down ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of coding). Memo-writing is considered data as it can take the form of preliminary propositions or ideas about emerging categories, which can be considered the “written records of analysis” (Creswell & Clark, 2007). (Memo-writing is explained in more depth in the following coding section.)

Data collection and analysis happen simultaneously in grounded theory. This allows the researcher to constantly be in contact with the participants’ words, allowing them to shape not just the final product of the theory, but also the direction of the data collection itself. By allowing analysis to inform the data collection process, verification of the resulting theory is done throughout the research process, “rather than assuming that verification is possible only through follow-up quantitative research” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274).

Interviews

The main form of data collection for this study was semi-structured individual interviews. While qualitative researchers often rely on interviews to explore participants’ beliefs and perspectives, I acknowledge that interviews are not merely neutral tools; in them, data are based on personal interactions (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Silverman, 2000, 2006). Interviewing is “inextricably and unavoidably historically, politically, and contextually bound” (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 695), and an interview is best regarded as a “negotiated text” (p. 716). I am also aware that my participants may have been more likely to respond in ways they deemed socially desirable or may have guarded their responses due to the cross-cultural nature of a White researcher asking questions of a Black student (Yin, 2009).

Gubrium and Holstein (2003) suggest that "Interviewing nonwhite subjects may require a researcher to conduct extensive ethnographic fieldwork, both before and during the interview process, [centering] on how the lived experiences of the members of the particular subject category under consideration can inform participants' conversation in the interview situation" (p. 133). With that mind, I took steps to provide my participants with ways to know me before I began the interview process, including visiting campus groups that provide support to students matching the criteria of my data sample.

Data collection and analysis followed a model based on Strauss and Corbin's work (1998) and involved the following steps: (1) conducting in-person individual interviews with each of the six participants, focusing on one open-ended question: "I'm sure you can think of many other students from your neighborhood or high school who didn't make it to college, and you did. What do you think accounts for that?"; (2) using open coding on the transcripts in order to create tentative themes (based on factors emerging from the data such as the importance of teachers who challenged them and family members who were strict in their discipline) and to create future interview questions based on those codes; (3) conducting a second round of interviews focused on probing those codes and themes in greater depth; (4) using open coding on those transcripts to create themes; and (5) creating comparisons and sorting codes and themes until categories emerged (See Appendix 1 for a list of codes and categories).

I conducted two interviews with each participant, for a total of 12 interviews, with an average interview length of 45 minutes, generating a total of 176 double-spaced pages of transcribed interview data. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed

verbatim. Those transcripts were then coded using the process described above, using coding, constant comparison, memoing, and memo sorting. The open coding process, also called initial coding, was used to develop categories of information about the phenomenon, along with subcategories or themes (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Open coding involved coding participants' words as actions or "coding with gerunds" (Glaser, 1965). Initial coding involved naming words, lines, and segments of data. This was followed by focused coding, in which the most significant and frequent codes from the initial coding were compared to each other. Data were compared across participants with a constant search for similarities and differences. Through repeated comparison and sorting, categories emerged. The final step in the process was theoretical coding in which the codes were integrated into an analytical framework or story (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Coding

Though the process of coding occurs simultaneously with collection, it is important to explain the different types of coding used in grounded theory. Charmaz (2006) explains that through coding, grounded theory researchers attempt to create an "interpretive rendering that begins with coding and illuminates studied life" (p. 43). This is done through two types of coding: open and axial.

Open coding, also called initial coding, is used to develop categories of information about the phenomenon, along with properties or subcategories (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Open coding often involves coding participants' words as actions. For instance, if a participant says, "Well, it got worse and worse so that every time I took a breath, the pain was horrible", that could be coded as "having excruciating pain" or "foreseeing breathing crisis" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 44). Glaser (1965) calls this "coding

with gerunds”. During this process, the researcher is constantly comparing data with data, looking for similarities and differences, while holding one’s own perspective as one part of the data, or one view among many. This should help to create an analytic framework, interpreting “what is happening and mak[ing] relationships between implicit processes and structures visible” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54).

Axial coding is then used to identify one open coding category to focus on: the “core” phenomenon. The following questions are then asked about the core phenomenon: What was central to this process? What influenced or caused this phenomenon to occur? What strategies were employed during this process? What effect occurred? This step in the coding involves using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to assemble the data in new ways, possibly using a visual model. While open coding may be performed word-by-word or line-by-line, axial coding allows the researcher to analyze large chunks of data. Using the example given in the open coding section, those codes could be combined with others to create the axial codes “feeling forced to live one day at a time” or “reducing life-threatening risk” (Charmaz, 2006). These categories can then be expanded with sub-categories and linked with other categories in order to produce a model that brings the codes together as a whole.

Memo-writing took place throughout the coding process, as it forced the researcher to analyze the data and codes early in the research process. Memos should attempt to “identify patterns, invoke respondents’ stories to illustrate points, bring in raw data, and make precise comparisons” (Charmax, 2006, p. 82). Memos are a “partial, preliminary, and provisional” way to explore one’s ideas about categories, but they compose a crucial part of the data as they are eventually used to frame one’s

theoretical statement and possibly identify gaps in the research (p. 84).

Trustworthiness

Though qualitative studies acknowledge that no researcher can truly be detached from the study, it is my responsibility to document my process along the way to increase its validity. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) remind us, in qualitative studies, “Terms such as transferability, dependability, and confirmability replace positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (p. 24). How I confirm my analysis is connected to the very process of analysis itself, especially as I consider the ethical issues of reciprocity (What will my participants gain from my study? How will I establish supportive relationships with my participants?) and dependability (How will I use labels that my participants would use to reflect their voices?).

I used the following strategies gathered from the qualitative research literature as part of the research methodology to improve the trustworthiness of this study (Bogden and Biklen, 2007, Glesne, 1999, and Hatch, 2002). Through my involvement with the previously mentioned campus groups, I developed a relationship with my participants prior to interviewing them. Within the data analysis, I employed member checking and peer review and debriefing in order to build trustworthiness (Creswell & Clark, 2007). I shared my interview transcripts and ongoing analysis with my participants. This is especially important with young adults because it allows them to “hear what the researchers think and to respond directly to researchers’ interpretations of their lives” (Eder & Fingerson, 2003, p. 37). I asked them questions about themes that arose from the data and my interpretations of their words.

I also took the transcripts of the first round of interviews, as well as my preliminary open coding analysis and tentative future interview questions, to a meeting

with a Black female doctoral student who grew up in an urban area. She provided feedback from a perspective that I do not have. I also attempted to decentralize my power through shared, collaborative data analysis with participants. The collaborative data analysis consisted of individual member-checking of transcripts and a group dialogue with 5 of the 6 participants around the themes that I saw emerging from their stories. During this collaborative process, the participants both confirmed and elaborated on my interpretations. I feel that it is crucially important in a study in which the researcher is White and the researched are Black, that my interpretations not be the "official" findings, separate from my participants' interpretations or the interpretations from those who are part of that cultural group.

Two final strategies that I employed were the use of conceptual density and the clarification of my own bias as the researcher through the use of memoing. Conceptual density is defined as a strong familiarity with the data, wherein concept development and relationships are constantly and systematically checked out against the data, with an emphasis on conceptualization rather than just description (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This conceptualization came from my personal experiences with my participants and helped my readers to really "see" my participants and understand their perspectives. I also continually reflected on my own bias and subjectivity through the use of a reflective journal and conceptual memos throughout the research process.

Grounded theory specifically suggests that the constant making of comparisons, creation of generative and concept-related questions, theoretical sampling, and systematic coding procedures all enhance the trustworthiness of a study (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Using these methods should protect the researcher from accepting any

of the participant's voices on the researcher's own terms. It should force the researcher's own voice to be "questioning, questioned, and provisional" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 280).

Subjectivity Statement

As a former secondary English teacher, who spent three years in the public school classroom, as well as a current college instructor, teaching a course on the social foundations of education, I bring my own knowledge of curriculum, social justice, and pedagogy to this study. My journey to the doctorate degree started when I was teaching 10th grade English. One day, I had a powerful interaction with one of my students, a Black student I'll call Vivienne, who questioned my discipline in front of the class. One of my White students had said something mildly disrespectful to me, and when I ignored him, Vivienne muttered, "Oh, you know if that had been one of us, we'd be in the office right now." The class fell silent, waiting for my response. I motioned to the hallway, and she followed me, dragging her feet and refusing to look me in the eye. After a few minutes, I said to her, "Vivienne, if you really feel that way about me, I must have done something to cause that, and so I apologize." She looked up at me in disbelief.

"You're apologizing to me?" she asked. When I nodded, she said, "Ms. Tripp, it's not really you. It's just most teachers throw the Black kids out of class for little things like that, and the White kids get away with it, and it makes me really mad."

That conversation crystallized one of my nagging suspicions: race was still playing a factor in the segregation of my students. My honors class was filled with "well-behaved" White students; my standard class was filled with almost all Black students, many smarter than their honors counterparts. When I suggested that one of my

standard students, an intelligent and creative young Black man, should move up to honors, he just looked at me in disbelief and shook his head. “No, Ms. Tripp, I don’t belong there,” he told me.

How does this happen? The teachers that I worked with were good teachers. Our school ranked among the top schools in the nation each year I was there. The teachers really cared about their students, but there remained an apparent difference between the way Black and White students were treated, academically and socially. While I hated leaving my students to come back to school full-time, I knew that I needed to learn more if I truly wanted to investigate this phenomenon and to discover what my part could be in changing it.

Now, toward the end of my doctoral program, my possible role in changing the status quo is becoming clearer. My future career as a teacher educator will fulfill me only to the extent that I am able to work toward closing the achievement gap between Black and White students, to support teachers in examining their own culturally based beliefs and how those impact their instruction and their relationships with students, and to bring to light the hidden ways in which we continue to discriminate against Black students.

My role as a researcher in this study is informed by these experiences, by my own identity as a White, middle-class female, and by the inequities in the public school system that I have experienced through study and personal experiences. I have committed myself to work toward addressing and combating these injustices, and I bring this dedication to this study.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

In an article-style dissertation, the findings of the study are organized within the findings chapter in the form of journal articles. Prior to the first article, I will provide participant descriptions, an explanation of the data analysis process, and a brief description of each article.

Participant Descriptions

The participants in this study were six Black first-generation male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools in Florida and who were attending a large, public, highly selective, predominantly White institution (PWI) in the southern United States. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22. Each of the students attended a high-poverty high school in Florida, and five of the six participants attended high school in urban areas. Their assigned pseudonyms were Felipe, John, Trey, Ryan, George, and Marcus. I will describe their background, as well as a few of the key factors they described as supporting their resilience.

Felipe

Felipe, in his first year of college during the interview process, graduated from an urban high school in the Jacksonville area. He grew up with both parents until his mother died while he was in high school. His father, who grew up in the Florida Panhandle, joined the military after being drafted during the Vietnam War and never attended college. After the death of Felipe’s mother, his father struggled to support the family on his own, and they faced the possibility of foreclosure on their home. Felipe cited his teachers and administrators as a crucial support for him during this difficult time period.

John

John, also in his first year of college during the interview process, graduated from an urban high school in the Miami-Dade area and identified as biracial. He grew up with both parents until they divorced when he was nine years old. John cited his father, a Black man who grew up in New York City and joined the military as a young man, as a strong support for him both before and after the divorce. His mother grew up in Nicaragua, and he identified her drive for education as another important factor in the support of his resilience. Unlike his father, his mother did attend some college but was unable to financially support herself in order to complete her degree.

Trey

Trey, in his second year of college during the interview process, graduated from an urban high school in the Miami-Dade area. He grew up in a matriarchal family composed of his grandmother, his mother, and his aunt. His grandmother gave birth to his mother when she was 14 years old, and his mother gave birth to his oldest brother at the age of 18. Neither was able to attain a college degree, and in fact, his grandmother stopped attending school after eighth grade. Trey described the financial security that he experienced growing up in a house where each adult worked full-time, despite a lack of formal education. However, Trey described that he learned from his family members' experiences what he did not want for his life. He explained that he derived support for his academic success from their belief in him and from their desire for him to have a better life than they did.

Ryan

Ryan, in his second year of college during the interview process, graduated from an urban high school in the Miami-Dade area. He grew up with Haitian immigrant

parents, whom he described as being stricter than the parents of anyone else he knew. His parents, who did not complete a high school education, were strong supporters of the power of education to provide opportunities for their children, and they had high expectations that each of their children would graduate from college. He described those high expectations, as well as the support and role models provided by his older siblings, as key factors in the development of his resilience.

George

George, who was preparing to graduate from college during the interview process, graduated from an urban high school in the Orlando area. He also grew up with Haitian immigrant parents, and he was the only person in his family (including his two brothers) who was born in the United States. He described the strict discipline of his parents as one of the key factors that contributed to his resilience, as well as the personal relationships that he developed with his teachers. In particular, he mentioned teachers who were honest with him about the challenges that he faced as a Black male growing up in a poor area and enabled him to face those challenges and overcome them.

Marcus

Marcus, who was also preparing to graduate from college during the interview process, graduated from a rural high school in the Lake Okeechobee area. Until high school he was raised by his mother, who had a high school education and grew up in the same area that he did. His mother, who worked at a daycare, moved away when he was in high school, but he remained in the area to finish high school and lived with his aunt. He described the importance of the support provided by his administrators and his

mentor through the Take Stock in Children program in providing assistance to him during that time.

Data Analysis Process

In a grounded theory study, interviews and analysis take place in rounds. The first round of interviews was transcribed and coded. Codes were gerund-based and focused on addressing the research question. Examples of initial coding after that round included: being part of Take Stock in Children (a mentoring program), having parents with strict discipline, having parents who valued education, having a challenging teacher, developing a personal relationship with your teacher, and having an administrator or teacher who supported you. Those codes were connected to each individual interview and used to create individualized probing questions for the second round of interviews. For example, when one of Ryan's statements was coded "being tracked into an advanced class", the probing question created from that code was, "You said that being tracked into advanced classes was one factor that supported you and that those in standard classes were 'left to fend for themselves'. Tell me more about kind of support you received in advanced classes and how it was different than what was offered in standard classes."

During the second round of interviews, I also asked questions based on factors that were brought up in the first interview by certain participants, but not others. For instance, one participant described the importance of being able to discuss "real-world" issues, such as racism, with his teachers. For those participants whose first round of interviews were not coded with the focused code "having a teacher who discussed real-world issues", I asked them, "Other participants have described the importance of having a teacher who was real with them, who could discuss issues with them such as

the challenges faced by Black men in particular. Describe how your teachers addressed issues like this, or if they did at all."

After the second round of interviews, constant comparison was used. Initial codes and their accompanying data were reread, compared with one another, and used to form a common, theoretical code, called a focused code. Similar codes were grouped together under these focused codes. For example, the following codes were grouped together under the focused code "finding success in school": having a challenging teacher, being tracked into an advanced class, and having an administrator or teacher who supported you. The focused code gave a broader view of the process being described and led to memo-writing.

Ongoing memo-writing throughout the analysis process facilitated the creation of theoretical categories and allowed for the creation of comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes, codes and category, and category and concept and for making inferences about these comparisons (Charmaz, 2006). The memos also described the processes represented by the focused codes and tentatively enabled the beginning of theories explaining the support of the participants' resilience. The focused codes then became emergent categories as codes were further combined, revised, or expanded during the constant comparative analysis. In the example above, the focused code was changed to the emergent category of "school support".

In short, the interviews were coded first with initial codes describing the data. The second round of interviews was then created based on those initial codes and then coded using the same initial codes. Both rounds of interviews were then coded with the more theoretical, focused codes. During this process, the memoing and creation of the

emergent categories deepened the description of each category. A theory that could contribute to an explanation of the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools began to emerge. It was based on three categories of support: family support, school support, and external support.

Not everything fit into the emergent theoretical categories, however. One set of initial codes, labeled “individual characteristics”, had to be dismantled and re-coded as possible outcomes related to different support systems. It included codes such as: feeling different from others in one’s neighborhood, developing leadership skills, and having spiritual faith. In other words, a participant could have developed leadership skills due to his participation in a community mentoring program or due to his family responsibilities, such as taking care of his younger siblings. In the first instance, that code would then be coded as “external support”, and the second instance would be coded as “family support”. The three types of support (family, school, and external) were then examined through the lens of the hardiness framework described in the first article, in order to more fully examine the interaction among the types of support experienced by the participants through their relationships. A graphic was then created to display the dynamic interactions among these relationships (Appendix D).

Article Descriptions

For these participants, the development of resilience was supported at every stage of their lives by their relationships. Findings indicated that as previously suggested by the literature, family and school relationships were crucial in providing much-needed support. However, external support was also identified as a key factor in this study, specifically in form of community mentoring groups and religious organizations. All three of these relationship types contributed to the development of

self-efficacy, previously identified as a key element of resilience. (See Appendix C for a description of each type of support.) The findings from this study are presented in this chapter as three distinct articles. These articles were written with different audiences in mind to address the different facets of this study. The first article was written for a top-tier research journal such as *Urban Education* to examine the theory as a whole. The second article was written for a peer-reviewed research journal that focuses on the education of marginalized populations to examine the interaction between the relationships of the participants with their parents and their relationships with their teachers. The third article was written for a practitioner-focused journal to examine how school personnel, such as teachers and administrators, can support the resilience of their students. This article will be published in the September 2013 issue of *Educational Leadership*. A brief summary of the findings from the study, as presented in three articles, is provided here.

The first article, entitled "The Dynamic Interaction of Relationships", is an overview and examination of the theory created from the findings. It examines the factors that scaffolded the resilience of the participants with the goal of creating a grounded theory of resilience for Black male students from high-poverty schools. The three categories of protective factors identified by the participants (family support, school support, and external support) are organized in a framework of hardiness (a psychological term similar to resilience). This framework is composed of three attitudes of hardiness: commitment (wanting to be involved with others rather than isolated), control (developing a sense of agency over one's surroundings), and challenge (wanting to learn from all experiences, rather than avoiding risk). The resilience of the

participants was enabled by their interactive relationships with and among family members, school personnel, and community members. The findings from this study suggest that these students were supported by a network of relationships and that their interactions created a web that lifted them up and enabled them to become resilient.

The second article, entitled “Expanding the Definition of Parental Involvement” examines the interaction of two elements of the three types of support experienced by the participants: family support and school support. It specifically examines how the definition of parental involvement described by the participants expands on the traditional definition of parental involvement held by many teachers (volunteering at the school, attending teacher-parent conferences, etc.). Parental involvement was described as crucial to the statistically exceptional academic achievement of the participants, and they described their parents’ involvement in three home-based ways: instilling the values of education and hard work, setting high expectations, and enforcing strict discipline.

The third article, entitled “Relationships that Break the Color Line”, examines one element of the three types of support experienced by the participants: school support. The participants described the importance of having a personal relationship with a teacher who recognized their abilities and challenged them. They listed being in an honors or advanced class as a supportive factor that provided them with high-quality, personally invested teachers. Those teachers, along with supportive school administrators, supported the development of the participants’ academic work ethic.

Finally, in chapter Five, I examine the substantive theory developed from the findings, connect it to the literature explored in Chapter Two, and present implications

for researchers, teacher educators and practicing educators. Although the first two articles examine implications separately, a concluding examination of the overall themes and implications of the study is provided in the final chapter.

Article 1: The Dynamic Interaction of Relationships

Disparity in academic achievement is an abiding challenge for our nation's schools. Varied factors such as race, poverty, and access to high quality teachers and schools contribute to these disparities (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012; Osbome & Walker, 2006). Researchers have devoted particular attention to issues of race in examining why identifying as Black can be a risk factor connected to low academic performance (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 1999; Skiba, Homer, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011; Warikoo & Carter, 2009). These risk factors facing many Black students include the increased probability that Black students will live in poor neighborhoods, be exposed to community violence and racism, and attend schools with fewer resources, more poorly qualified teachers, and higher concentrations of minorities than those attended by White students from similar socio-economic backgrounds (Aud, et al., 2010; Berliner, 2006; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Hughes, Stenhjem, & Newkirk, 2007; Jencks & Phillips, 1998; King, 2005; Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001; Tavernise, 2011).

Black males face increased risk related to the likelihood that they will be placed in special education without an accurate diagnosis, retained, suspended, or expelled (Davis, 2003; Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, & Cogburn, 2008; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Levin, 2008; Monroe, 2005; Noguera, 2009). The achievement gap is clearly reflected in high school graduation rates as well. In 2008, less than half (47 percent) of all Black male high school students graduated in four years from U.S. high schools, compared to 78 percent of White male students (Holzman, 2010).

Yet risk factors do not determine academic outcomes. Those who achieve success despite the presence of adversity are considered to possess resilience, a term which for the purposes of this study will be defined as “a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity” (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). Resilience research in the area of academic achievement examines high educational achievement in the presence of risk factors that usually contribute to low academic performance (Benard, 1991; Garmenzy, 1991; Morales & Trotman, 2004). This study examines the factors that scaffold resilience through an examination of the perspectives of a small group of Black, male college students, who despite the presence of additional risk factors such as living in poverty and being the first in their families to attend a four-year university have demonstrated exceptional academic success.

One of the purposes of resilience research is to enhance understanding of the resilience process in order to increase the resilience of other at-risk students. In order to accomplish this, many researchers have specifically examined racial subpopulations in order to identify their differences and similarities in developing resilience (e.g. Ford, 1996; Gandara, 1995; Gardynik and McDonald, 2005; Gibson, 1996; Milstein & Henry, 2000; Morales, 2000; Myers & Taylor, 1998). In examining racial differences in resilience, researchers have found that resilient Black students reported having supportive relationships with teachers, parents, or other mentors, and having a sense of self-efficacy, which is identified as a crucial factor in developing resilience (Borman & Overman, 2004; Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Morales, 2008; Morales, 2010; Peck, et al., 2008; Wasonga, Christman, & Kilmer, 2003). How do Black students develop the

characteristic of self-efficacy, however? How do they experience the support of their parents, teachers, or mentors? There are still a limited number of studies that examine how the dynamic interaction of relationships specifically supports the development of the resilience of Black students from high-poverty neighborhoods, and even fewer studies on the resilience of Black males specifically.

In addition, most resilience studies are based on surveys and quantitative data, which do not capture the specific stories of these students. A focus on supportive factors and on processes that promote resiliency, rather than the individual characteristics of resilient students, reflects the current trends in resiliency research (Davey, Eaker & Walters, 2003). There is a clear need for qualitative resilience studies that allow participants to share their stories in greater depth and for theory that originates from those stories, focusing on the mechanisms by which the interactions among these supportive factors keep vulnerable youth on-track educationally (Peck, Roeser, Zarrett, & Eccles, 2008).

The purpose of this research was to generate a theory describing the resilience of first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were attending a large, public, predominantly White university in the southern United States. In creating a framework for understanding the support systems identified by the participants as crucial to the development of their resilience, I came across a similar area of research in the field of psychology and stress management. Within stress management research, factors that negate the effects of stress are referred to as “stress buffers”. Having those stress buffers allows those who may otherwise succumb to depression or anxiety to overcome challenges with positive

attitudes. Those who overcome stressful situations are referred to as “hardy” (Funk, 1992; Maddi, 2002). Just as resilience is connected to the presence of caring relationships and a high sense of self-efficacy, hardiness develops in those who are encouraged by their supportive relationships to turn adversity into opportunity and especially in those who experience the success of bringing their ideas to fruition (Khoshaba & Maddi, 1999). The “3 Cs of hardiness” (the characteristics of commitment, control, and challenge), a framework developed by Maddi (2002) to examine this process, is used here to examine how the supportive relationships experienced by the participants in this study nurtured them in the characteristics of hardiness and resilience.

The findings presented in this article are based on original research involving six first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and who were attending a large, public, predominantly White university in the southern United States.

Method

I used qualitative methods, guided by a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), to investigate the resilience of six first-generation Black male college students. Most prior resilience studies are based on surveys and quantitative data; therefore, qualitative methods were used in the current study in order to examine important discourses and nuances of participants’ meanings that might be less visible in large-scale studies (Mishna, Saini, & Solomon, 2009).

Participants

The participants in this study were six Black first-generation male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools in Florida and who were

currently attending a large, public, highly selective, predominantly White institution (PWI) in the southern United States. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22. Purposeful sampling was used to yield a participant pool able to provide information-rich cases for in-depth understanding (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Patton, 2002). The participants were nominated by representatives from two scholarship programs that support Black students from high-poverty high schools, as well as recruited from campus Black student organizations. This method of “community nomination”, in which participants are recruited through direct contact with the targeted community, enables the researcher to gain an understanding of that community by allowing these groups to suggest students who might be a good fit for the study, or for students within those groups to nominate themselves (Foster, 1992). The scholarship program coordinators nominated three students based on the criteria of identifying as a Black male first-generation college student who graduated from a high-poverty high school in Florida, and four students self-nominated after receiving a recruitment email. One student ultimately dropped out of the study after signing the informed consent form but before scheduling an interview due to family issues, leaving six total participants. Each of the students attended a high-poverty high school in Florida, and five of the six participants attended high school in urban areas.

Theoretical framework

This study was informed by the theoretical framework of social constructivism, which assumes that reality cannot be independent of the observers involved and instead describes individual human subjects engaging with objects in the world and making sense of them (Crotty, 1998). As the purpose of this study was to generate a theory grounded in the reality of the participants and in their experience of developing

resilience, this framework allowed me to examine the meaning-making of the participants without questioning the “truth” of their statements or experiences. The social constructivist framework of the study, defined as the “collective generation and transmission of meaning” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58), acknowledges that our reality is often influenced by the groups to which we belong, either culturally or locally, and by the power structure under which we live. Consistent with this theoretical framework, the data were composed entirely of individual interviews. The first interview was composed of one question: “I’m sure you can think of many other students from your neighborhood or high school who didn’t make it to college, and you did. What do you think accounts for that?” The students’ perspectives of their own realities were crucial to the process of creating a theory of resilience based on their experiences.

The grounded theory generated in this study is built on socially constructed data and the researcher’s meaning-making of the participants’ narratives within a particular context. As a White researcher working within a cross-cultural context and within the constructivist grounded theory tradition, I assumed that neither data nor theories are discovered, but instead are co-constructed by the researcher through interactions with participants (Charmaz, 2006). In evaluating the trustworthiness of the study therefore, I recognized that as a White, privileged, middle-class female, who attended suburban private schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, I came from an etic, or outsider, perspective to examine the experiences of my participants: Black male first-generation college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools. To address this, I took the transcripts of the first round of interviews, as well as my preliminary open coding analysis and tentative future interview questions, to a meeting with a Black female

doctoral student who grew up in an urban area. She provided feedback from a perspective that I do not have. I also attempted to decentralize my power through shared, collaborative data analysis with participants. The collaborative data analysis consisted of individual member-checking of transcripts and a group dialogue around the themes that I saw emerging from their stories. During this collaborative process, the participants both confirmed and elaborated on my interpretations.

Many White social scientists and educators are either unaware of or detached from the realities of racism and as a result, can conduct social research that explains the differences of White students and non-White students in terms of cultural deficits. This reality impacted the study design. I choose to focus on how these Black students were supported by the structures of school and family, rather than how they were exceptions to the rule of “struggling poor Black student” (Carter & Goodwin, 1994). This is also in line with the current direction of resilience research, which focuses more on the supportive factors involved in developing resilience and less on the risk factors or individual resilience characteristics (Benard, 1991).

Data collection and analysis

Grounded theory methodology, used for this study, is appropriate for studies in which a researcher will analyze data in order to generate a substantive theory when current theories are inadequate or nonexistent (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Current studies on the resilience of Black students are based on quantitative data such as surveys, which limit participants to a constrained set of statements that may or may not accurately reflect their realities. In the current study, qualitative data collected through interviews is grounded in the voices of the participants and provides important insight into the many layers of this issue.

Data collection and analysis happen simultaneously in grounded theory. This simultaneous process, along with the use of the constant comparative method, allows the researcher to constantly be in contact with the participants' words, letting the words shape the final product of the theory and the direction of the data collection itself (Glaser, 1965). Data collection and analysis followed a model based on Strauss and Corbin's work (1998) and involved the following steps: (1) conducting in-person individual interviews with each of the six participants, focusing on one open-ended question: "I'm sure you can think of many other students from your neighborhood or high school who didn't make it to college, and you did. What do you think accounts for that?"; (2) using open coding on the transcripts in order to create tentative themes (based on factors emerging from the data such as the importance of teachers who challenged them and family members who were strict in their discipline) and to create future interview questions based on those codes; (3) conducting a second round of interviews focused on probing those codes and themes in greater depth; (4) using open coding on those transcripts to create themes; and (5) creating comparisons and sorting codes and themes until categories emerged (See Appendix C for a list of codes and categories).

I conducted two interviews with each participant, for a total of 12 interviews, with an average interview length of 45 minutes, generating a total of 176 double-spaced pages of transcribed interview data. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Those transcripts were then coded using the process described above, using coding, constant comparison, memoing, and memo sorting. The open coding process, also called initial coding, was used to develop categories of information about the

phenomenon, along with subcategories or themes (Creswell & Clark, 2007). Open coding involved coding participants' words as actions or "coding with gerunds" (Glaser, 1965). Initial coding involved naming words, lines, and segments of data. This was followed by focused coding, in which the most significant and frequent codes from the initial coding were compared to each other. Data were compared across participants with a constant search for similarities and differences. Through repeated comparison and sorting, categories emerged. The final step in the process was theoretical coding in which the codes were integrated into an analytical framework or story (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I have used a framework from stress management research in the field of psychology referred to as the "3Cs of Hardiness", described in the following section, to illustrate and create a frame for the theory that emerged from this data.

The Hardiness Framework

The area of academic resilience research within the education field focuses on examining the concept of academic success within the context of significant adversity. The demographic factors of race, gender, family income and education level, and school characteristics of the participants in this study (identifying as Black males attending a high-poverty high school, growing up with family members who did not graduate from college) constitute significant adversity within the United States today. Research suggests that increased family income level (Mortenson, 1993; Ottinger, 1991), identifying as White (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Everson & Millsap, 2004; Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994), and increased parental education (Radford, Berkner, Wheeless, & Shepherd, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 1998) are positively

correlated with educational success. Yet, these resilient students, whose demographic factors identify them as more likely to fail academically, succeeded.

As the area of resilience research examines success in the face of adversity, the area of hardiness research within the field of psychology examines the effect of stress on different populations, specifically why certain people seem to be protected from the potentially debilitating effects of stress. Those who thrive under stressful conditions are often said to possess "stress buffers" (Maddi, 2002; Oullette, 1993). These are referred to as "protective factors" within resilience research (Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Morales, 2010). In other words, the protective factors within one's environment (such as caring relationships) act as stress buffers and enable resilient individuals to develop characteristics of hardiness. These characteristics of hardiness are similar to the attitude of self-efficacy, a crucial factor in developing resilience. These characteristics of hardiness have been categorized into three areas, also called the "3Cs of hardiness": commitment, control, and challenge (Maddi, 2002).

1. **Commitment**: "a predisposition to be involved with people, things, and contexts rather than be detached, isolated, or alienated".
2. **Control**: "struggling to have an influence on outcomes going on around oneself, rather than sinking into passivity and powerlessness"
3. **Challenge**: "wanting to learn continually from one's experience, whether positive or negative, rather than playing it safe by avoiding uncertainties and potential threats". (Maddi, 2002, p. 174).

These characteristics appear to be isolated characteristics within an individual. However, the focus of this study is to examine how the protective factors within the environment surrounding individuals support the individuals in developing these characteristics. These stress buffers are generated from supports in the environment, and therefore, the relationships among stress buffers are more important in this study

than the individual buffers themselves. This relationship among characteristics is similarly important within the hardiness framework, as Maddi (2002) describes it:

> Imagine people high in control but simultaneously low in commitment and challenge. Such people would want to determine outcomes but would not want to waste time and effort learning from experience or feeling involved with people, things, and events… Such people would also be egotistical and would be vulnerable to seeing themselves as better than the others and as having nothing more to learn. There is surprisingly little to call hardiness in this orientation. (p. 175)

This addresses a current limitation of the resilience body of literature: the isolation of major protective factors in the lives of resilient individuals (Gardynik & McDonald, 2005; Garmezy, 1991; Gordan, 1995). Supportive factors do not operate in isolation, and their interaction can be much more powerful if studied as such (Luthar, Doernberger, & Zigler, 1993). Bonnie Benard's (1991) framework of "protective factors" (characteristics of environments that appear to counteract potential negative outcomes) started this shift of focus toward an investigation of the relationships among those factors that allow at-risk students to thrive. Benard's (1991) three categories of protective factors (caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution) are well-represented by the findings of this study, but we need to know more about how these factors interact and intersect in order to scaffold the development of the 3 Cs of hardiness within individuals. With that in mind, the following section examines the relationships among the protective factors that arose from the data for this study, using the 3Cs framework.

A Grounded Theory of Resilience

Three main categories of protective factors emerged from the data: family support, school support (including administrators and teachers), and external support

(such as being part of a community mentoring organization). In the framework below, these categories will be labeled as follows:

- Family Support: FS
- School Support: SS
- External Support: ES

As is common within qualitative research, I did not attempt to establish a hierarchical system in which one category causes another or is more important than another. The purpose of the theory generated from these specific participants is to identify "plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 278). In this case, the relationships of interest are among the factors that supported first-generation, Black college students from high-poverty high schools in developing resilience.

In using the 3Cs framework to organize the data, the relationships among the factors and their role in scaffolding the development of hardiness took precedence. Some categories (such as school support) were separated into sub-categories, in order to allow those sub-categories to be separated and placed into an area with another sub-category based on the 3 Cs framework. For example, the category of school support included the sub-categories of "having a supportive administrator" and "having challenging teachers who believed in one's ability". The former fit into the commitment area of the hardiness framework, dealing with being involved in a supportive organization, and the latter fit into the challenge area of the framework, dealing with being able to learn from events both positive and negative. While both sub-categories fit within the category of school support, it is more effective to examine exactly how each sub-category of school support contributed to developing the resilience of these

students. Each area will be examined holistically therefore, rather than isolating each category, in order to better examine the relationships among them and how they scaffold the development of stress buffers.

From this study, the three areas of hardiness, along with the sub-categories that demonstrate the factors that scaffolded the development of each attitude, include:

- **Commitment**: Having parents who valued education (FS), having a personal relationship with one's teacher (SS), having a supportive school administrator (SS), being part of a community mentoring program (ES)
- **Control**: being part of a religious organization (ES), having parents who valued hard work (FS), having parents who promoted independence and responsibility (FS)
- **Challenge**: having challenging teachers (SS), being tracked into a gifted or honors program (SS), having parents who enforced strict discipline (FS)

Commitment

Being committed to a group or even to another person seems to support students in developing a sense of engagement and purpose in their daily tasks, even when those tasks might not appear engaging on the surface. For these students, the relationships that supported the development of commitment included relationships with parents, teachers, school administrators, and mentors. The way that these interdependent relationships supported the development of commitment in these participants is the focus of this section.

Growing up with family members who valued education supported all of the participants in developing a sense of commitment to their own academic achievement. Trey, who grew up in a matriarchal family composed of his grandmother, mother, and aunts, described his conversations with his grandmother as a key component in his commitment to academic success. Her education ended in the eighth grade, and she told him often that she wanted more for him, as did his mother, whose education ended

after high school. Seeing their struggles and hard work inspired Trey to focus on his education, or as he explained it,

> They encouraged me through the life that they lived and through their worries and stressing to me how important education is. ‘Get the education; get the better jobs’, that’s what they always said. There’s a lot of things that they can’t relate to when I go back to speak with them about it because they haven’t had those experiences, but I like to learn from their life lessons.

Having a parent who valued education and had high expectations for him was a crucial factor in John’s success as well. John, who grew up biracial with a Nicaraguan mother and a Black father, explained that his academic achievement was supported by his mother’s value for education and his father’s high expectations. He attributed part of his mother’s value for education to her cultural background and experiences growing up in Nicaragua.

> When the civil war happened in Nicaragua, it was very scary for my family, her side of the family, because at that time they were starting to take kids out of the school and forcing them to join the Sandinista army. The neighborhood where she came from is totally destroyed now…and, especially in the Spanish community, you got to go to school. I think that’s why she takes education so seriously.

While all of the participants described their parents’ dedication to their education, many of their parents had not had positive experiences in school, and none of them had completed any education past the high school level. This created an interesting dynamic in parent-teacher relationships. All of the participants described their parents as being engaged in their education; the participants’ teachers, however, may not have. The definition of parental engagement has traditionally focused mostly on parental involvement in school-based activities, such as volunteering or attending parent-teacher conferences. The parents of these participants were unable to participate in that type of support, but their engagement in their children’s academic achievement was

nonetheless impactful. In stressing the importance of academic achievement with their children, as well as in acknowledging their own academic shortcomings, the parents pressed their children to develop relationships with their teachers. Those relationships then became key supportive factors in nurturing the resilience of these participants.

All of the participants identified at least one teacher whose presence in their lives contributed to their resilience. Their parents encouraged them to develop personal relationships with their teachers, often because their parents' own academic shortcomings prevented them from helping with assignments directly. Marcus, who grew up with his mother and aunt in a poor, agricultural-based area, described his mother's engagement in his education this way: "She just pushed me to study harder. Even if she didn't understand it, she would pretty much always tell me to ask my teachers, and I guess that's when I started bugging them all the time; that's where the relationships with them started." Developing those personal relationships also allowed the participants to get help with their needs outside the classroom, such as completing applications for college. Trey described one high school English teacher who edited his college essays multiple times, and Marcus described multiple high school teachers whom he still contacts with questions he has about possible opportunities post-college.

Both teachers and school administrators often met academic needs that could not be met by the participants' parents. John had a supportive relationship with an administrator who was in charge of the extracurricular activities at his high school when he became the student government president:

> Student government was something that a lot of girls did; the guys were focused on sports or whatever. So she made sure I stayed on top of that, made sure I maintained a good image. If I needed anybody to talk to while I was in school, or if I had to get something off my chest, she was there.

George, whose parents were born in Haiti, described his family as a “very strong support system” who pushed him to graduate high school and told him, “You’re going to university; you’re going to an actual four-year institution; you’re leaving the house. You’re going to be something greater than what we are.” He often turned to his guidance counselors for support as well, and he saw them offering that support for other students in his predominately Black school, as did Marcus, whose administrators mailed off scholarship applications for him. George described his guidance counselors’ dedication and their knowledge of the struggles that their student population faced: “Even though they were White, they knew the information that was out there about the disadvantage of African-American students, and they wanted to make sure those students succeeded. They had an investment in those students.”

All of the participants described knowing that others were invested in their success as one of the reasons that they continued to work hard in the face of adversity. Through school or church all of the participants were involved in some form of mentorship program, which impacted their self-esteem and their ability to continue to be engaged and successful in school. Half of the participants took part in Take Stock in Children, a Florida non-profit organization that provides college scholarships and assigned mentors to academically promising students at high dropout risk starting in middle school. The participants met weekly with their mentors, who were adult Black males in their community who provided a successful older male role model for them. Marcus described his relationship with his mentor: “We usually met once every week during lunch time, and we’d just talk about different things, whether it was family or school or scholarships. I had some scholarship interviews that were really far away, and

he would drive me because we didn't have a car." His mentor was a welder, and his daughter was attending Florida A&M University when Marcus was in high school. Marcus described his support as not academic, specifically, but more motivational, as someone who always knew about any problems or struggles he was having and helped him deal with any issues he might be having.

Trey's mentor was able to provide some academic support, as he had completed a master's degree, and Trey said that he gave him a book on the aspects of a successful person in order to prepare for college and to develop his leadership skills. He told Trey, "I'll know if you read it or not, so don't play around with me." Reading it helped Trey to step out of his comfort zone and improve his communication skills to the point where he is now leading a group of 50 freshmen in a mentorship program at the university level. Trey's relationship with his mentor was one in which each person learned from the other:

> I started to really look forward to those meetings because every time we spoke, I learned something more about him, and he learned something more about me. He just doesn't know how much I learned from him, but he [the mentor] said, 'I've also learned a lot from you, even in my old age.' He said in high school he wasn't the best of students, but he went to the Navy and got the discipline he needed and then went to college. He encouraged me to go to college right away, and he said the sooner I went, the better off I would be.

The relationships with parents, teachers, school administrators, and mentors provided a structure of support that allowed the young men in this study to succeed. This foundation then encouraged the growth of the attitude of agency described in the following section. While all of the participants attributed their success to their perseverance and drive, they also attributed the development of those characteristics to their relationships. The development of those relationships contributed to a sense of

being able to identify how to solve any problems that one encounters. Having supportive adults in their lives enabled them exert control and to not be overwhelmed by challenging circumstances, knowing they could get help if they needed it.

Control

The attitude of control is also referred to as agency thought in the field of psychology and education: “the perceived capacity to use one's pathways to reach desired goals” (Snyder, 2002, p. 251). Those with high agency thought processes often use self-talk such as “I can do this” or “I can overcome this” to motivate themselves. In other words, those with a high sense of control do not feel like victims; they fully believe that their efforts can influence their desired outcome. The participants in this study described those feelings of control in different ways: as having a sense of their own “destiny for greatness” or as seeing that one’s life has a purpose. Those feelings were developed through their relationships with religious leaders and their parents. They described the attitude of control as knowing that if they needed help, there would be a way to get it through one of the many different sources of support that they experienced.

All of the participants attributed the development of that mindset to growing up in church. While most of them did not describe themselves as regular churchgoers, their experiences in church created a sense of divine purpose in their lives. George described his spiritual faith in this way: “I’m not going to say I’m religious, but I’m a very spiritual person, and I take everything I learned in church very seriously.” Having that faith also led him to believe that God had a purpose for him and that God’s divine intervention in his life contributed to his success. Ryan, whose parents also grew up in Haiti and insisted that their children attend church with them every week, also believed

that attending church had an impact on his life and encouraged him to be a good son and a successful student.

Felipe attributed his very life to his faith, as he had contemplated suicide in high school after his mother died. "It was just that mentality of saying I can just be gone, or I can see that my life does have a purpose, you know? I believe that God put me here for a reason, and as long as I stay alive, I have something to contribute." Felipe's faith was encouraged by his father and through being part of a Bible Club at his high school. Trey's faith was supported by his grandmother, who tested him on Bible verses and the Ten Commandments, but who also taught him that Christianity was not an individual pursuit.

> She always said, 'You're going to be successful in anything that you put your mind to. Don't forget those who helped you gain that success, and don't forget those who need your help to gain the success that you've gained.' I'm still holding true to those values today.

John described his faith in similar ways, especially in his involvement with a sports ministry with his church, whose purpose was to "get people out of their neighborhoods and bad situations and do something positive". That basketball program supported him and other students in developing sportsmanship as well as in sharing faith and Bible lessons. The sense that being successful created an obligation to then help others achieve success was shared by Trey, who expressed gratitude for the spiritual lessons of his grandmother. She taught him "to chase success but don't be so consumed with self-greed that you forget that there are still others who need help and that I was once in the position in which I needed help." Felipe had a similar perspective:

> I didn't get here all on my own; I really didn't. I'm not even the person the way I am all on my own; it was just from those influences. And that's why I feel like that's what my purpose is: to also carry on that trait to future

> generations down the road. Things do get hectic, things do get stressful; we have to support each other.

The importance of supporting those in your community who need it seemed to balance any sense of superiority that developed from having a sense of one's own destiny for greatness. Trey explained it this way: "When we get to a point where we feel it's only our personal motivation or drive that matters, we lose sight of a whole lot of other social institutions and structures that helped us to where we are." George claimed that advising his younger sisters also made him a stronger person and gave him a sense of responsibility. Felipe attributed some of his agency to watching superhero movies as a kid and wanting to save the day like his heroes Spiderman and Ironman, as well as to reading and writing epic hero tales.

Another factor that contributed to the participants developing the characteristic of control was the way their family members enforced discipline. All of the participants identified the strong discipline of their family members as a crucial factor in the nurturing of their resilience. Despite not always valuing this discipline when they were younger, all of the participants reflected on the ways that it eventually made them able to take charge of their own lives and enact self-discipline. Trey described how his parents checked in with his teacher on early-release days: "In the second grade, early-release day would be like a curse on me because my parents would come and get me out earlier, and the teacher would always have something to say that I wasn't doing, like he's slacking off or something like that, and the next day I would not be slacking off any more!"

John explained that taking care of his younger sisters enabled him to develop responsibility even when he had to sacrifice having fun with his friends: "My parents

actually divorced when I was nine. It was a bad situation, but it taught me great life lessons. I had to basically become the man of the house, and I had to mature at a very young age because it was me, my mom and my two sisters." Ryan said he and his siblings learned from a young age that their parents were much stricter than the parents of their friends: "They could just say no, and you couldn't even ask them why or what's the reason; you'd have to accept it."

These challenging experiences provided more than structure while the students were living at home. They created an attitude of circumspection, a maturity that allowed the participants to set up a structure of discipline for themselves once they moved away to college. Trey described his current perspective on his parents' discipline:

> As children you always want a lot, but sometimes what you want isn't what's best for you, and as parents they're there to guide you. There's a lot of things that I look back now that I wanted and didn't get, but it didn't make a great impact on my life from not having it. So that is what makes a good parent, the ability to say no, because I personally believe if you're always saying yes to your kids and getting them whatever they want, they grow up with this attitude that everything is supposed to be hand-given to them, and whatever they want they're supposed to get it, and that's not really how life works.

Hard work and making hard choices also contributed to the success of all of the participants. Their sense of agency supported them in persevering through difficult situations, such as Felipe's experience of financial struggles in high school after his mother died, when his house went into foreclosure and he started wearing the same clothes every day. He describes that time period this way:

> I remember this one day I just broke down, and I didn't even know why because there were so many things. I thought about my mom, I thought about my situation with my dad and how I couldn't help him keep the house. Every day I went to school it would seem like everybody would be having fun and seeing my life is all good, but here I'm going home every day faced with this...just the lack of resources, you know? And I just felt like that, and that's why I wanted to give up…And it went from that point

> to, ‘You know what? I’m going to turn my life into something where I can use my life to help others. My life has purpose, so I’m going to use it to the best I can in a positive way.

A sense of agency or a “can-do” attitude can be identified as solely an individual characteristic, but the crucial factors in developing that attitude were the relationships that these participants had. Through these relationships, the characteristics of commitment and control were intertwined. Because the participants were supported by those relationships, they were able to dedicate themselves to their schoolwork. Because the participants were committed to their academic achievement and engaged with their own learning, they developed a sense of agency. Developing those characteristics was a by-product of the support that was provided within the relationships with the participants’ teachers, family members, and community members. The attitude of challenge, described next, was developed through the experiences that the participants had in those relationships.

Challenge

The attitude of challenge describes those who prefer to learn through experience, whether positive or negative. They do not seek comfort or security; rather, they believe that each event in their lives holds meaning and provides an opportunity for growth. In this study, the challenging events experienced by the participants supported them in developing a resilient attitude, rather than serving as risks or roadblocks. Because these challenging experiences were experienced within a context that included a trusted relationship with a teacher or parent, the experiences were less likely to be perceived as threats. Examining the factors that supported participants through these challenging experiences is the focus of this section.

As mentioned in the section on control, all participants described making hard choices that others in similar situations could or would not make. There was a strong perception, however, that this was not an individually developed power or characteristic. Instead, it was an attitude that was developed because of their relationships with trusted authority figures. Trey explained:

> I held myself to a higher standard, yes, but I feel, who am I to judge? I never liked to hear [it said about] people in my community, "They don't try." Like I said, they just had different circumstances which I didn't, and I must be accepting of that and try to help them or their children so that they don't continue that cycle. But that's a flaw that I see in a lot of the educated students who come from communities like mine; they completely forget about the community because they had a couple of bad experiences, and I don't agree with it. I don't think it's right because when you do that, you're damning a lot more potential students who have just as much ability because we're all born with the same ability, in my mind; it's just the circumstances in which we live our lives and things that we are faced with and the ways we get to explore certain abilities.

One of the trusted authority figures for each of the participants was a teacher. All of the participants were tracked into a gifted or honors program, which provided them with a positive context in which to develop their abilities. They were recognized as having strong academic abilities, an unusual experience for many young Black men in public schools (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Despite spending their days in advanced classes, they saw the impact that less challenging classes had on their peers. As Trey explained, "I'm not saying that all the teachers at my school who had regular students treated them badly or that they didn't teach as well, but I'm saying the vast majority of them fit that stereotype." Ryan said that when his teacher was absent one day, he experienced what life was like outside his honors classes:

> So it was me and these two other guys who got mixed into the regular classes; I feel like that was my first experience of what class was like on the other side. It was pretty weird because there were no windows in the building and it was really small; everything was really close together. It

> was pretty bad…I remember the teacher trying to discipline this one guy and I guess the student ended up just walking out of class and leaving and then the security guard brought him back. So I don't remember what he [the teacher] was actually teaching, but I do remember him trying to discipline him [the student], and it seemed like it happened regularly because all the other students were just minding their own business or talking.

The focus on discipline rather than instruction was one that several of the participants mentioned in describing how the regular classes differed from the honors classes at their schools. They also described fewer resources and teachers who acted more as babysitters than instructors, handing out low-level worksheets with very little personal interaction with their students.

In contrast, the participants reported that being in advanced classes engaged them mentally and shaped their identities. Most of the participants described themselves as bookworms who spent many afternoons indoors reading when their peers were out playing basketball or hanging out. This choice to dedicate themselves to academics may have made them anomalies in their neighborhoods, but it was supported by both their parents and their teachers. In describing his high school science teacher, Marcus explained, "She was definitely more supportive but also challenging, just pushing me, telling me not to be afraid to ask. So being able to think on your own and not rely on others, that was one thing that she definitely strived for."

George saw his success as connected to his ability to make hard choices that other students were not willing to make, such as taking advanced classes that challenged him and forced him to put in the work. He described himself this way: "The situation may be really hard, but I'm not the type of person to quit. A lot of people, especially where I'm from, will say, 'Oh, it's tough, so why even go after it? I'm going to go for what's easier.'' Trey agreed that choosing to be in honors classes was something

that most students in his school refused to do because they thought it was too hard. Having teachers who were tough on him, however, was something that supported him in achieving success.

The teachers identified as their supporters by participants never communicated that their students could not handle the work because of their backgrounds; rather, they acknowledged the difficulties that students might face, provided the extra help that was needed, and made sure that their students knew that they believed in them. John described his physics teacher in this way:

> He would never tell us, ‘Oh, this class is going to be hard so I’m going to dumb it down so you guys can be able to pass it.’ He says, ‘I’m going to give you the exact same work, and you’re going to put in the effort for it, but if you put in the effort, I know you can pass.’

Acknowledging the effort required and setting high expectations were not enough to nurture resilient characteristics in these students, however. The participants noted that knowing that their teachers believed in them encouraged them to persevere. Felipe described the significance of knowing a teacher believed in him in talking about his high school math teacher: “Like, man, this guy believes in me; I don’t want to let him down. He must see something in me that I might not even see.” The students reported that they were able to overcome the challenges associated with growing up in high-poverty neighborhoods through the support of their teachers. Marcus described the ways that his tenth grade science teacher showed that she believed in him and supported him in getting to college when his mother was unable to help him: “I’ve known her since [tenth grade] so she’s pretty much helped me with a lot of things, even when it came down to like applying for schools or just researching, especially with scholarships.”

Through these supportive relationships with teachers and parents, the participants were supporting in developing a sense of challenge, a sense that they wouldn't back down from something just because it was hard. The way they interacted with the world was directly impacted by this characteristic, as many of them discussed their ability to face challenges and meet difficult standards once they got to college because this characteristic was developed in them earlier in their lives. The support provided by their network of relationships created a safety net that enabled these students to try new things and risk failure, knowing that they could always pick themselves back up and try again.

Discussion

The focus of resilience research is moving toward an examination of resilience as a process, rather than a product (Benard, 2004; McCubbin, Thompson, & McCubbin, 2001; Morales, 2008). My findings are aligned with that concept, in that the theory that is grounded in the data reflects the varied ways in which resilience is developed and supported. By examining the support systems of resilient Black male college students, I have developed a grounded theory of resilience enabled by their interactive relationships with family members, school personnel, and community members.

The interactive support systems that the participants described in this study are consistent with much of the literature on the resilience of Black students (Borman & Overman, 2004; Peck, et al., 2008; Wasonga, et al., 2003). The findings also reinforce Morales' (2010) claim that the mentoring of school personnel and the mentoring of family members interacted as protective factor clusters to contribute to the development of resilience in the lives of Black college undergraduates. The findings also expand on Cunningham and Swanson's (2010) finding that high parental monitoring was more

clearly related to the academic resilience of Black high school students than the factors of school support and future expectations through the direct correlation of high parental monitoring with the development of academic self-esteem.

Parental monitoring was a key factor in the resilience of these students. However, the current study helps illuminate the dynamic interplay of factors, rather than examining parental monitoring in isolation. The focus on this interaction is consistent with research on successful Black male college students, in that the participants attributed their success to the support of their family, school, and community. In a study based on interviews with 219 Black male college students, Harper (2012) found that participants did not describe themselves as inherently superior to their peers, but rather, they believed that lower-performing Black male students did not experience success because they had not encountered relationships that motivated them to be engaged or to strive for academic success. The participants in that study believed that it was unfortunate that more Black men did not have these same opportunities. As Harper (2012) explained, “In many instances, they claimed it was serendipity, not aptitude, that largely determined which Black men succeeded” (p. 15).

Family support was critical in relation to the nurturing of the resilience of these students, yet none of the families were able to meet all the needs of their students. Therefore, the support of school personnel or community members was critical in developing the fabric of support that scaffolded these young men. (See Appendix D for a diagram of this relationship.) While teachers or administrators might perceive that the parents of students like these are not involved in their children’s education, the study shows that parents were aware of when their children needed more academic help.

More importantly, they perceived teachers as knowledgeable resources for their children. By acknowledging those areas and encouraging the students in this study to get those needs met by teachers or administrators, the parents of the participants assisted them in developing crucial personal relationships with teachers, ones in which they were not afraid to ask questions. They also modeled an attitude of humility, acknowledging that it is impossible to get help without admitting where and how you need it. Cunningham and Swanson (2010) similarly examined the impact of parental education level on student academic achievement and found that while a low level of parental education is negatively correlated with student academic success, that impact can be contradicted by the presence of a home environment where education is valued and where a strong parental work ethic is evident. For these participants, the work ethic, the value of education, and the high expectations expressed by their family members were clear supports in the nurturing of their resilience. For Black students in Wasonga, et al.'s (2003) study, high parental expectations also contributed to a development of resilience and of self-efficacy, as students were able to translate their parents' belief in them to a belief in their own academic abilities.

School support was also a critical factor in the nurturing of resilience for these participants. The development and recognition of the academic competence of the participants were key factors in their successful teacher-student relationships. The teachers described in this study were not only supportive and understanding; they were demanding and held the students to a high standard because they knew that the students could meet it. This "warm demander" stance combines an attitude of care with the maintenance of high expectations (Ross, Bondy, & Hambacher, 2008; Ware, 2006).

For these participants, knowing that their teachers believed in them and expected success from them enabled them to overcome any challenges they faced. This confirms Corbett, Wilson, and Williams' (2005) finding that teachers who communicated high expectations to their students, along with a refusal to accept the possibility of failure, were less likely to demonstrate an achievement gap between low and high income students. In the current study, high expectations were combined with recognition of their individual abilities. In other words, they described teachers saying things to them like, "I know this is hard, but I know you can do the work" or "I know you can do better than this, so let me help you give it another try." This confirms research articulating that school can be seen as a haven for students undergoing stressful events outside school, especially if they see school as a place where they could develop and display competence (Cunningham & Swanson, 2010). This combination of high expectations and supportive belief was a powerful factor in nurturing their resilience.

Finally, having a support system outside the home played another important role for the participants in this study. One method of support was found through having a male mentor, either through a community mentoring program or through church. This confirms Morales' (2008) finding that gender played an important role in the efficacy of mentorship for Black male students, in that the majority of students in this study reported experiencing powerful support from male mentors. However, the participants in the current study also reported finding support from female school personnel. The participants noted that their most powerful relationships were with teachers who were caring, challenging, and who believed in their ability, regardless of gender or race. In fact, many of the participants specifically described White female teachers who were

honest about the challenges facing Black male students and who encouraged students to overcome those challenges. The gender of their mentors was less important than the mentors' ability to meet the needs that could not be filled by their family members. The community mentors were able to advise the participants on college applications, drive them to scholarship interviews, and provide a college-educated role model for them to emulate. The participants described this mentoring as crucial to the development of college-oriented perspectives.

Conclusion and Implications

Research in the area of resilience has grown from examining the risk factors that students face to examining the assets that they hold as individuals (Benard, 2004). However, the focus on the isolation of major protective factors in the lives of resilient individuals continues to limit the scope and applicability of resilience research. As was demonstrated in this study, the combinations and specific arrangements of protective factors that enhance resilience are much more salient. It is this combination that is likely to support an at-risk student in developing resilience (Morales & Trotman, 2004).

Within the field of education research, our task is now to continue to delineate how these interactive systems of protective factors develop, how they operate, how they enable a given student within his or her environment, and how they can be facilitated and nurtured by their support systems, specifically those within schools. It appears that teachers and administrators who can recognize a broadened definition of family engagement so that they can affirm the supportive actions taken by families will be more likely to support the nurturing of resilience in their students. Further research on how to accomplish this would be valuable. In addition, because this study focused on the experiences of a specific subgroup of students (Black male students), further

research on different racial or gender-based subgroups would provide valuable insights and information.

Finally, it should be noted that "non-resilient" individuals were not included in this study. As this was a non-experimental research design, a control group was not required. However, within the field of resilience research, the classic study design is a "person-focused" longitudinal approach, where two groups are drawn from the same high-risk sample and examined for adaptive and maladaptive outcomes (Cowen, Wyman, Work, Kim, Fagen, & Magnus, 1997; Werner & Smith, 1992). Characteristics of the students within the resilient subgroup can then be compared with those from within the same group who developed significant adjustment problems, in order to determine what protective factors correlate with the development of resilience. This type of study design allows for a close examination of the factors and relationships that contribute to resilience for certain students, even when all other factors are controlled. Further studies in this area could benefit from a mixed-methods approach, combining the grounded theory methodology of this study with a longitudinal examination of resilient and non-resilient individuals from within the same group.

The goal of this study has been to provide a detailed look at how, through supportive relationships, a certain group of resilient Black students attending high-poverty schools overcame the risks they faced within the American public school system. However, there is more work to be done. Specifically, we need to interpret how and why more Black students living in poverty fare in school as they do and to develop policy that will ameliorate racial gaps in achievement. This study identifies a few possible ways to counteract the achievement gap, but more importantly, its methods

identify the key factor in learning more about this issue: the stories of the students themselves. The voices of those students who have defied that achievement gap will continue to be crucial in further research on how to support resilience for all Black students.

Article 2: Expanding the Definition of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is clearly linked with academic success for all students, regardless of income level (Desimone, 1999; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Fan & Chen, 2001; Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Knopf & Swick, 2007).[2] Despite its important connection to academic achievement, studies of parental involvement reveal disagreement on how to define the term (Jeynes, 2005; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). The traditional definition of parental involvement includes volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, helping with homework, and attending school events (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2009; Hill & Taylor, 2004). In this definition, teachers solicit parent volunteers to provide supplies, such as snacks or fundraiser items, and to invest both time and money (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al., 2009; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Those who are unable to volunteer, often low-income parents, are considered "uninvolved". However, Hoge, Smit, and Crist (1997) provided an expanded definition of parental involvement that includes the following four components: parental expectations, parental interest, parental involvement in school, and parent-child communication. This expanded definition can provide new insight into the meaning of this term.

Low-income or non-White[3] populations often focus on the non-school elements of parental involvement (expectations, interest, and parent-child communication), and

[2] The term parental involvement is used here with the understanding that different family members can act as parents, regardless of their biological connection to the student.

[3] I use the terms "White" and "Black" deliberately, despite their problematic definitions. For the purposes of this study, students identified as "White" are identified as Caucasian and non-Hispanic, and students identified as "Black" are identified as Black Americans of African descent and any Black Americans who

this can impact teachers' perceptions of their involvement level (Nieto, 1987). In other words, parents who may be involved in their children's education in different ways, such as by creating a strong structure of discipline in the home or by encouraging the value of education and hard work, are seen as uninvolved by their children's teachers if they do not attend Back to School Night or volunteer in their children's classroom. This is often connected to income level or culture, as low-income parents can be less present and more hesitant to connect with schools and teachers when compared to middle-income parents, and non-White parents may measure involvement by their activities at home and in the community instead of their activities at school (Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Lawson, 2003).

Perception is reality for teachers, however, as Wong and Hughes' (2006) study of parental involvement revealed. White teachers rated the involvement of Black parents as lower than White parents, even when those same Black parents self-reported a high level of involvement with their children's education. In a study of high school teachers' beliefs about academic achievement, Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, and Jennings (2010), reported that 45 of the 50 teachers surveyed cited home factors as a primary factor explaining low achievement in Black male high school students, connecting students' academic struggles to a lack of parental involvement. This is an example of deficit thinking, which occurs when teachers assume that low-income or non-White students are lacking important elements crucial to academic success, based on an over-generalization of family background or a negative perception of students' life experiences (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Two examples of deficit thinking stated in Garcia

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do not identify as being of African descent, as well as Black Americans who are of Caribbean or Hispanic descent (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

and Guerra's (2004) study of teachers' perceptions of urban students include: "Today a lot of these kids are from broken homes." and "Some children are already so harmed by their lives that they cannot perform at the same level as other children." (p. 159-160).

Because parental involvement can be a crucial factor in supporting students' academic achievement and a teacher's perception of that parental involvement can differ based on income level and culture, a clear, broad definition of parental involvement is needed, particularly one that takes differing perspectives based on culture or income level into account. A teacher's perception of appropriate parental involvement is often based on the traditional definition described above, and this definition may, in fact, run counter to the ways in which students actually *need* their parents to be involved. Understanding the definition and the role of parental involvement from students' perspectives might help teachers broaden their perspectives about this important factor. This article therefore draws on a study of the perspectives of high-achieving Black male students from low-income communities describing their perspectives about the role of parental involvement in their academic success. An examination of the results of that study will follow a brief literature review examining the importance of moving beyond deficit thinking and creating a broader definition of parental involvement.

Moving Beyond Deficit Thinking

Teachers' perceptions that families are not involved can actually impact a student's ability to achieve, as teachers who make negative judgments about the values of parents based upon their own values tend to have relatively low expectations for students' achievement (Hauser-Cram, Sirin, & Stipek, 2003). Teachers' self-efficacy is affected by these judgments because teachers who believe their students' parents are

unable to support their children's learning may give up on those students or hold low expectations for them.

Deficit thinking theory places the blame for the lack of academic success of poor minority students on students and their families, with the explanation that these families are disadvantaged, at risk, and uninvolved. Teachers who exhibit this way of thinking often use the students' backgrounds as an excuse for failure (Delpit, 1995; Johnson, 1994; Valencia, 1991). White teachers who exhibit deficit thinking may believe that students who are culturally different from themselves innately have less competence, less intelligence, less capability, and less self-motivation (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004), or they may believe that students' home lives and prior experiences have created insurmountable gaps related to achievement. When teachers engage in deficit thinking, any solutions for improvement seem beyond the teacher's control.

A Broader Definition of Parental Involvement

Lack of perceived parental involvement is often used as the explanation for low student performance, as well as a main factor in the achievement gap between low-income, minority students and their high-income peers (Bol & Berry, 2005; Gonzalez & Ayala-Alcantar, 2008; Lynn, et. al, 2010; Patterson, Hale, & Stessman, 2008; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). However, low-income parents often report barriers to their interaction with teachers, citing factors such as their own negative schooling experiences or language barriers (Drummond & Stipek, 2004).

Walker (2011) found that elementary teachers often attribute the academic failure of their low-income students to students' and families' negative attitudes, lack of aspirations or lack of educational goals. However, a recent review of British education research reported that parents of low-income students and the students themselves had

high aspirations and greatly valued the importance of education; however, due to their own lack of academic success, parents needed teachers to provide practical knowledge that could enable them to support their children (Cummings, Laing, Law, McLaughlin, Papps, Todd, & Woolner, 2012). In fact, interventions that emphasized involving parents in their own learning and in their children's schooling were more effective than interventions focused on changing parents' attitudes about education. Teachers who provided information to those parents in the form of effective home learning techniques, the basics of higher education, and how to support one's child at school were much more likely to see a positive impact on children's academic achievement (Cummings, et al., 2012).

Low-income parents, especially non-White low-income parents, often see their role in supporting their child's education as almost a philosophical one, sharing why they value education and hard work. Lopez (2001) explored the concept of hard work as related to parental involvement in his study on a migrant family whose children were highly academically successful. He discovered that while this Mexican family was viewed as "uninvolved" with their children's education by the school, the family saw the goal of their involvement in their children's schooling differently than the school did. The parents defined their involvement by showing their children the value of education through the medium of hard work. Lopez described their involvement as translating "the lessons of working hard in the field into lessons for working hard in school, with the hope that their children would seek options outside of migratory labor" (p. 422). Research suggests that this focus on parental expectations might be more important than a traditional definition of parental involvement based on volunteering at school.

Hoge, et al. (1997) reported in a two-year longitudinal study of over 300 public middle school students that the frequency with which parents visited their child's school had no discernible impact on their academic achievement.

Although studies like these examine how teachers or schools can change their practices or broaden their understanding of parental involvement in order to encourage it, it is also important to examine the ways low-income Black students and parents define parental involvement in their children's academic success. Some studies have found that low-income Black parents see the following home-based elements as part of their role in advocating for their children's academic success: setting clear and consistent behavioral rules, engaging in frequent and meaningful conversations, encouraging independence, and expressing high expectations (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Jackson & Remillard, 2005). However, few studies have examined successful low-income Black students' perceptions of the ways in which their parents were involved in their education, which is the purpose of this article.

Qualitative Methodology

This qualitative, interview-based study was taken from a larger study designed to generate a theory describing the resilience of first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and who were currently attending a large, public, predominately White institution (PWI). Because of the social constructivist framework (Crotty, 1998) of the study, which acknowledges that our reality is often influenced by the groups to which we belong and by the power structure under which we live, the data consisted entirely of individual interviews which originated from one question: "I'm sure you can think of many other students from your neighborhood or high school who didn't make it to college, and you did. What do you think accounts for

that?" The goal of the larger study was to learn more about the factors that these students believed supported them in getting ready for and into college, and most importantly, their perceptions of those factors. One of the main factors that emerged as crucial to the nurturing of their resilience was parental involvement.

Participants

The participants in this study were six Black first-generation male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools in Florida and who were attending a PWI. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22. Purposeful sampling yielded participants who could provide information-rich cases for in-depth understanding (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Patton, 2001). The method of purposeful sampling used here was "community nomination", which allows the researcher to gain an understanding of a targeted community by recruiting from that community directly (Foster, 1997). The participants were recruited from two scholarship programs that support Black students from high-poverty high schools, as well as from Black student organizations on campus. Five of the six participants attended high school in urban areas. Table 1 illustrates further demographic information about each participant, along with their pseudonyms.

Table 4-1. Participants

Participant	Classification	High School Location (County)
Felipe	Freshman	Duval
John	Freshman	Miami-Dade
Trey	Sophomore	Miami-Dade
Ryan	Sophomore	Miami-Dade
George	Senior	Orange
Marcus	Senior	Palm Beach County

Data collection and analysis

Grounded theory methodology was used for this study since grounded theory is used to create a substantive theory when current theories are inadequate or nonexistent (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The qualitative data collected through these interviews is grounded in the voices of the participants and provides important insight into the many layers of the concept of resilience that may not have been explored through quantitative, survey-based studies limiting participants to a constrained set of statements (e.g., Borman & Overman, 2004; Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Peck et al., 2008).

Data collection and analysis happen simultaneously in grounded theory. Data collection and analysis followed a model based on Strauss and Corbin's work (1998) that involved the following steps: (1) conducting in-person individual interviews with each of the six participants, focusing on one open-ended question: "I'm sure you can think of many other students from your neighborhood or high school who didn't make it to college, and you did. What do you think accounts for that?"; (2) using open coding on those transcripts to create tentative themes (based on factors emerging from the data) and to create future interview questions based on those codes; (3) conducting a second round of interviews focused on probing those codes and themes in greater depth; (4) using open coding on those transcripts to create themes; and (5) creating comparisons and sorting codes and themes until categories emerged. Open coding themes emerging from the data in step 2 included the following: having parents who valued education, having parents who said no, having parents who believed in you, and having parents who gave you responsibility. Follow-up questions for the second round of interviews

were created that probed these concepts, and finally, in step 5, the final category of parental involvement as a main factor in nurturing resilience emerged.

In evaluating the trustworthiness of the study, I recognize that as a White, privileged, middle-class female, I come from an *etic*, or outsider, perspective to examine the experiences of my participants. To address this, I took the transcripts of the first round of interviews, as well as my preliminary open coding analysis and tentative future interview questions, to a meeting with a Black female doctoral student, who grew up in an urban area. She helped to provide feedback from a perspective that I do not have. I also attempted to decentralize my power through shared, collaborative data analysis with my participants, which consisted of individual member-checking and a group dialogue around the themes that I saw emerging from their stories, in which the participants both confirmed and elaborated on my interpretations. That group dialogue occurred after step 4 of the model described above and involved discussing the themes that arose from the open coding process (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

Three main categories emerged from the data: school support (including administrators and teachers), external support (such as being part of a community mentoring organization), and family support (parental involvement or the support of family members acting as parents). Findings related to parental involvement are the focus of this article.

Findings

Parental involvement was described by all six of the participants as a crucial factor in the nurturing of their resilience. The category of parental involvement was broken down into three themes: instilling the values of education and hard work, setting high expectations, and enforcing strict discipline.

“You’re not going to get the things you want most without putting in the work.”

The theme of the importance of hard work, especially on academic tasks, was a crucial factor in the parental involvement of these participants. Each participant discussed having a parent who highly valued education and who showed that value through teaching their children the importance of hard work. Examples included having to re-write homework if it appeared messy and the expectation that children always make top grades (a C was seen as a failing grade). One biracial participant, John, explained it this way:

> Especially in the Spanish community, you got to go to school. I think that’s why she [my mom] takes education so seriously because that’s just a part of her culture and a part of her beliefs. But she always took education very seriously, and she’s the one that always pushed us that you have to make those A’s, you have to make those A’s, because that’s the only way that you’re going to get what you want.

Trey, who grew up in a matriarchal home composed of his mother, grandmother, and aunts, also discussed the importance of education in his household with the story about his family’s refusal to allow him to get a part-time job in high school to help support his family. “They said that school should come first,” he explained. “And as a result I always worked harder.” Trey also expressed interest in working toward an athletic scholarship for college, but his family steered him away from that as well, saying that they wanted him to make it to college solely on his academic ability. Marcus, who grew up in a poor, agricultural town, was taught by his mother that education was a way out of that poor community, where she had also been raised. When she decided to move away during Marcus’ junior year, he chose to stay with his aunt so that he didn’t have to switch schools. His mother’s advice to him at that point was to “definitely leave town, see

what’s out there, explore, get into a different environment and just use it to my advantage”.

The theme of working hard in order to change one’s life through education was also shared by Trey, who was raised in part by his grandmother whose education ended in the eighth grade. He remembered her advice:

> ‘You don’t want to have the kind of job that I’ve had, the jobs that I’ve had to endure and go through all of these years… it’s not something that I want for you,’ and she was joking, but she said, ‘I’d kill you if you ended up at a job like this,’ because she knew she had to work… she had to work so hard and had given me the opportunity… she was truly an over-comer for her time.

The combination of hard work and education was a key factor in John’s family as well, as they told him:

> And I think just their learning experiences and just seeing that me and my sisters have the potential and have the ability to do such great things in our lives and be able to not live that lifestyle that they did is why they pushed us so hard and made us want to do such great things because they know we have the opportunity to do it, we have the confidence to do it.. .and they’ve made us believe just because we don’t have the most money or we don’t have the best things doesn’t mean that you can’t get it for yourself. Because everything in America, everything that you do is opened up for grabs; if you want it, you can get it; you just have to work for it.

This focus on the importance of hard work matches previous research that reported that observing the strong work ethic of one’s mother enabled 74% of the participants to develop their own strong work ethic and by extension, their own sense of self-efficacy (Morales, 2010). In that same study, Morales reported that the factor of work ethic was a strong predictor of resilience independently, but when combined with the participants’ perceptions of their family members’ commitments and struggles, it became an even more powerful predictor.

“You are destined to do great things...but always ask questions.”

Another way that these parents were involved in their students’ education was through instilling high expectations and through their belief in the students’ abilities. As John described it, “You see all their kids doing average and you see other kids doing just the requirement, and all my family used to see me as going above and beyond.” His family’s high expectations did not seem unreachable because of their clear belief in his abilities, which he claimed gave him a sense of having a “destiny for greatness”.

When John started to struggle with some of his classes, his dad supported him by reminding him of his past accomplishments, but he did not attempt to help him academically:

> He would say, ‘You know how you got here? It is your will, your determination and the things that you’ve done in the past that have got you here. There’s very few people that will take the opportunity to try and strive and be the best and be in school and graduate with a 4.7 GPA. There’s very few people that go and stay after school every day and do class activities and activities to help the community and help their school. There’s very few people that become the presidents of their high school and want to do that, especially for a Black male to be able to achieve that potential. That’s the reason why you’re there.’

For these participants, their parents’ perspective about the value of education and their belief in their children’s abilities did not, however, mean that their parents communicated directly with teachers. Instead, the participants’ parents encouraged their children to ask questions of the teacher directly. Marcus said his mother created enrichment activities for him at home to practice his alphabet or counting skills, but she often did not understand his school assignments. Instead of communicating with teachers about the assignments, she advised him to ask his teachers for help. This form of parental involvement was crucial to Marcus’ development of a personal relationship with his teachers, which was a main factor in his academic success.

Felipe, whose mother died while he was in high school, described his father's belief in his abilities and support of his relationships with his teachers as a key factor in enabling him to overcome any struggles that he faced:

> He would just tell me every morning, 'You can do it.' Even when I brought a D on my report card, he would just say, 'Don't worry about it; don't let it get you down. I know you can do better than this, just listen to the teacher closely to what he or she wants you to do, ask questions; always ask questions and you'll be fine.'

This form of support involved empowering these participants to determine when they needed help and when to rely on the teacher to provide that help. This was interpreted by the parents and the students as an important support for high achievement. Yet studies suggest that teachers might misinterpret the actions of these parents as uninvolved and non-supportive. In a study comparing the perceptions of parents labeled as "involved" with those labeled as "uninvolved" by teachers, the Center for Strategic Research and Communication (2012) found both sets of parents listed helping with homework as a main factor in school involvement. However, some parents in the "involved" group felt that they had to spend "at least 15 to 30 minutes a week with [the] child while he or she works on homework", while those in the group that teachers perceived to be "uninvolved" believed that children would let them know on their own if they needed help. This belief in their students' abilities to recognize when they needed help and to find that help outside the home was reflected in the stories of the participants in the current study.

While teachers may perceive this "hands-off" approach to homework as having a negative impact on achievement, Felipe described it as a way to help him develop maturity: "It was kind of a way to give me a chance to show who I really am, if I did care

or didn't care; [my dad was] not someone who would say, 'You got to do this. You got to do that,' but [he] just allowed me to make that choice."

"I didn't get to do as much as I wanted to, but I guess that's a part of parenting, you have to tell the kid no."

Just as the participants' parents held their students to high academic standards, they had high expectations related to discipline. Each of the participants described feeling like they were the most-disciplined kids in school, the only kids in the neighborhood with strict parents, the ones who parents said no to them the most. In hindsight, this was described not as hardship, however, but as a key to their success. As Marcus described it, "My father passed away when I was ten, but I still had a good family structure to make sure that I was on a straight path, out of trouble, very disciplined… in the sense of curfew, whereas my friends might have been out later." As Ryan described it, his parents seemed more authoritarian than those of his friends: "I felt the difference [between us] or I guess one of the elements of how [my parents] were raised, that they could just say no and you couldn't even ask them why or what's the reason; you'd have to accept it."

This sense of being different from one's friends or peers was reported by each of the participants who described spending much of their time at home indoors with their family, not "hanging out" with their friends, but instead taking care of siblings, doing homework, or reading. The discipline that appeared so strict at a younger age, however, was internalized as responsibility and self-efficacy as the students grew older and their parents started to give them more responsibility. John described that process here:

> When you're a kid, your parents don't give you a choice. They tell you this is what you have to do: get it done. As I got older, they kind of loosened the reins a bit and they said you have to… here, you have responsibility now; you have to take care of what you have to take care of. And as I got

> older… since it was put into me at a young age, I told myself, ‘You know what? I got this paper due; I have to get it done.’ I know it’s due on such and such a date, so I made sure that I got it done on that date.

Trey could see the value of his family’s discipline reflected in his financial decisions:

> That’s a problem that I see also goes into the other students – they’re more materialistic than we are. I want to say they weren’t really taught the value of a dollar, and they’ll get money, and they’ll spend it, while on the other hand, we knew that every dollar that we got was precious because we didn’t know when the next one would come because our parents were that strict. And that’s what children need, they need strict parents.

In describing the discipline of their parents, each of the participants reflected on the necessity of that transition from strict rules to greater responsibility. Some of the students described being punished for bad grades, but most of them reported a sense of expectation that they wanted to live up to, not out of fear of punishment, but because they wanted to make their family members proud and to reach those high expectations. Teachers who could connect with and share those high expectations for students could expect to see similar academic success, they believed.

Through the development of high expectations, empowerment, responsibility, and an unwavering belief in their abilities, the parents of these participants enabled their children to succeed. The three themes of parental involvement (instilling the values of education and hard work, setting high expectations, and enforcing strict discipline) expand the traditional definition of parental involvement, and in some areas, counter it. However, the participants, who are members of a group often considered to be “at-risk,” believed these themes of parental involvement were strong contributors to their academic success and resilience.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to report the perceptions of parental involvement held by a small group of Black first-generation male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools. In a social constructivist study, the truth discovered through the participants' stories is assumed to be socially constructed and mediated by the interactions they have and the systems under which they live, as well as by the meaning-making process of the researcher. Therefore, findings from this study cannot be used by teachers to generalize strategies for successfully involving all similar parents in their children's education. However, the combination of these students' powerful stories and prior research in this area is a stepping stone to overcoming the cultural barriers that have separated White teachers from non-White, low-income students and their families.

The ways that these participants experienced effective parental involvement illustrate the differences between what is considered traditional parental involvement (and works for some students) and a broader definition of involvement that could work for a wider range of students. Some studies show, in fact, that traditional methods of parental involvement such as volunteering only predicted increased academic achievement for White students and that students' perceptions of parental involvement, parent-child discussion, and household rules were much more effective predictors of academic achievement for non-White students (Desimone, 1999).

In order for teachers to create productive partnerships with low-income Black parents, the following recommendations are suggested by this study and by related research. First, teachers should discuss with parents how they talk about the value of education and hard work with their children. Understanding their belief structures can

help teachers to match them and more effectively reach students. Sometimes developing a conceptual understanding can reveal differing choices related to achieving an important goal. For example, Valenzuela (2009) discussed the difference between the values of moving out of one's neighborhood to a "better" place versus staying there in order to make it better. In her study of a Houston high school, Valenzuela reported that Mexican-American students with low academic achievement described feeling disconnected from teachers who encouraged them to get out of the "barrio", when their cultural values encouraged them to improve themselves along with their communities, not at the expense of their communities.

Second, teachers should not assume that their students' parents *can* or *should* help with their homework. Because neither Marcus' mother nor Felipe's father could help them with their assignments, they encouraged them to develop strong personal relationships with their teachers, which developed into another supportive factor of their resilience. If teachers want to see more parental involvement, they might send home detailed descriptions of assignments with a calendar of due dates or call home to remind family members when assignments are due. Teachers might also call home to tell parents when their child is succeeding.

Third, teachers must share the high expectations that their students' parents hold for them. High parental expectations have been found to contribute to a development of resilience and of self-efficacy, as students are able to translate their parents' belief in them to a belief in their own academic abilities (Wasonga, Christman, & Kilmer, 2003). The same holds true for teacher expectations (Cushman, 2005; Ross, Bondy, & Hambacher, 2008; Ware, 2006). Corbett, Wilson, and Williams (2005) found that

teachers who communicated high expectations to their students, along with a refusal to accept the possibility of failure, were less likely to demonstrate an achievement gap between low and high income students. One highly successful teacher described her philosophy this way: “I believe they will perform well if they know I am concerned about what they do. I do think we have a group that someone has given up on. It is real easy to not expect much. That bothers me.” (p. 9). This same teacher had established a grading policy that any students earning a grade lower than a C on an assignment must do the assignment over, and described her parental involvement as making house calls and “show[ing] up on the porch with a book in my hand. My key phrase is, ‘I'm like one of your family.’ I just don't accept mediocrity.” (p. 10).

Creating effective methods of parental involvement remains a top priority for all schools, and yet, the methods used to do so are rarely innovative or culturally sensitive. Lopez et.al (2001) found that migrant-impacted school districts that were successful at increasing parental involvement did so by holding themselves accountable to meeting the needs of parents first, rather than expecting them to meet a prescribed standard of the kind of involvement they required. In a study of highly successful Hispanic schools along the Texas/Mexico border, Scribner, Young, and Pedroza (1999) found that staff members encouraged parental involvement by building on their cultural values through personal contact and structural accommodations. This study also addresses these possibilities by examining how one’s definition of involvement is relative. The ways that the parents of these students were involved in their education may not have fit the expectations of their schools, but they were highly effective for these students.

As national policy calls for increases in parental involvement and Common Core standards list parental involvement as a goal for all schools, now is a crucial time to examine what we mean by the term and how we can support effective parental involvement for all students (Center for Strategic Research and Communication, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Schools need to make a greater effort to understand specifically how low-income parents define the concept of involvement. This will enable teachers and schools to create a partnership with parents, rather than ignoring or demeaning their contributions. The "funds of knowledge" and belief systems of marginalized families can then be validated in the building of these partnerships (Moll, 1992, Valdes, 1996).

When teachers consistently reach out to parents and make a special effort to build a relationship with them, parents can become more involved in ways that teachers recognize as important and that can impact students' achievement (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Jacobbe, Ross, & Hensberry, 2012; Mapp, 1997). Those special efforts, however, go above and beyond parent-teacher conferences or calling for volunteers, and can include translating a PTA meeting into Spanish, purchasing planners for written dialogue (translated into the home language if necessary) with each student's family members, or hosting a Family Math Night (Ackerman, 2013; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Jacobbe, et al., 2012). For school districts that are not ready or able to attempt these methods, a suggested alternative is for teachers to validate the ways that parents are already involved in the education of their children and to support those efforts. Through personal relationships with the parents of their students, all teachers can support and promote their students' academic achievement.

Article 3: Relationships That Break the Color Line[4]

Introduction

In 1903, W .E. B. DuBois wrote, “the problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the color line” (DuBois, 1989, p. 29). When we examine the statistics on race-based disparities in achievement in today’s public schools, we see that the color line remains a problem in the 21st century. In 2009, only 13 percent of black 8th grade U.S. students reached the proficient level in reading comprehension on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), compared to 39 percent of white 8th grade students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Black students are also much more likely to live in poverty, as illustrated in a recent Pew Research Center report that revealed that “the typical black household had just $5,677 in wealth (assets minus debts) in 2009 . . . and the typical white household had $113,149” (Taylor, Fry, & Kochhar, 2011).

However, some black students from high-poverty backgrounds are academically successful. These resilient black students have been described as having supportive relationships with school personnel and having a sense of self-efficacy, a crucial factor in developing resilience (Borman & Overman, 2004; Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Morales, 2010; Peck, et al., 2008).

Survey-based resilience studies show us success is possible for these students, but they do not capture the students’ specific stories. The studies fail to address how students developed self-efficacy or what supportive relationships look like. When I interviewed first-generation black male college students who graduated from high-

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poverty high schools, their stories communicated that teacher and administrator relationships were crucial to their development of the resilience that led them to college. These six resilient students were members of campus black student organizations and volunteered for the study after receiving a recruitment email asking for black male first-generation students who graduated from public high schools. I specifically asked for students who were willing to participate in face-to-face interviews and share their stories of achievement despite adversity. For these students, their relationships with the K–12 teachers and administrators made the difference.

A Plan to Meet a Challenge

Black students make up 17 percent of the U.S. school population but only 9 percent of gifted classes (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2006). Yet all the black college students I interviewed were recommended for some type of advanced classes in their K–12 schooling. These classes provided students with teachers who recognized their abilities and challenged them.

George described an English teacher who created reports for each student, detailing the student's strengths and weaknesses based on the standardized test data from the year before. Each student had to create a plan for countering his or her weaknesses. Here is how George described the final step of taking the plan to school administrators to be signed:

> We had to introduce ourselves: "Hi, my name is George. I'm part of Ms. N's 10th grade English class, and do you have time so I can explain to you my report?" We had to do it specifically like that for every person we talked to, and they would ask you, "What are you going to do to make sure that you achieve that? What steps are you taking?" If they thought your answer wasn't good enough, then you would have to come back and redo it.

Helping students create a way to improve is one way their teachers helped them to nurture resilience.

A Personal Investment

These resilient students had teachers who were personally invested in them. The students could see these teachers' commitment to students when they hosted advanced placement study breakfasts on Saturdays or gave out their cell phone numbers and invited students to call them for extra help. These efforts by teachers inspired students to dedicate themselves to their education.

For students like Felipe, who faced personal crises like the death of his mom and the potential loss of his home, having a teacher who noticed that he was wearing the same clothes to school every day and took the time to talk to him was crucial:

> I remember he gave me a $50 [grocery] card for Christmas so I could finally buy some dinner, like good dinner instead of ramen noodles. You know, knowing that he cared made me want to try harder in school, like, man, this guy believes in me, I don't want to let him down. He must see something in me that I might not even see.

Although these students were in advanced classes, they still saw the devastating impact of disengaged teachers on their peers in other classes. Trey said, "It's as if they abandoned their job . . . as teachers to educate, and they just began to give them miniscule assignments that didn't really challenge them mentally."

Real-World Issues

The students acknowledged that growing up in a home without college-educated parents created academic challenges for them. However, having teachers who could connect what students were learning to what they considered real-world issues helped students to overcome those challenges.

George recalled a discussion on white privilege in his English class that was sparked by an analysis of the white snow surrounding Bigger Thomas as he is arrested in Richard Wright's *Native Son*. He said he was "shocked" to find an issue that affected his life directly "hidden in a book" written before he was born. Felipe described a math teacher who connected algebraic equations to sales graphs for major businesses and calculus concepts to the daily tasks of engineers. Jose remembered a history teacher whose real-world focus enabled him to approach academic reading in a new way: "I was able to read the chapter, see how the world works, and then see how the world has changed over time."

Valuable Guidance

First-generation college students might not have anyone at home to help them prepare for and apply to college. For these students, school administrators such as guidance counselors, community liaisons, and leaders of college assistance preparation programs filled that void. Here's how Marcus described it:

> You know how [some] parents prepay [for college] and start [saving] when you're born? My mother didn't have any of that, so I had to pretty much game-plan from the beginning. I definitely had a lot of help from my administration as far as, you know, stuff like you have to mail out these scholarships or getting stuff postmarked.

Having school personnel who acknowledged the challenges that students faced while expressing confidence in their abilities helped these students achieve seemingly insurmountable tasks.

Lessons Learned

For students struggling with the challenges of poverty, school can provide a haven and a ladder to opportunity. The successful black males I interviewed indicated that their teachers and administrators recognized their abilities, supported them, and pushed

them to succeed. These students are not gifted exceptions to our usual image of struggling poor black students. They are students who were encouraged and enabled by their schools. With the right support, their numbers could increase.

Race or socioeconomic status are not, and need not be, determinants of one's academic achievement. As Boykin and Noguera (2011) state, "If racial categories are indeed social and not primarily biological in nature, then it should be possible to fundamentally alter the predictability of racial patterns related to academic ability and performance *if we can eliminate the ways in which those patterns are entrenched within the structure and culture of a school*" (p. 26, italics in original). The common themes in these students' stories provide a helpful perspective on how teachers and administrators can break the destructive pattern of low achievement and to support all students in nurturing resilience. George perhaps said it best:

> I had teachers and administrators who wanted to make sure that students succeeded and who had an investment in those students. [They] would catch those who they saw were falling by the wayside and say, "Hey, let's get your conduct on track, and now that we've got your conduct on track, let's get you back on track academically."

As a teacher or administrator, you face this decision daily: Will you let students from disadvantaged backgrounds just fall by the wayside, or will you help them get on track to meet high expectations and find success?

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to generate a theory describing the resilience of first-generation Black male college students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were attending a large, public, highly selective, predominately White university in the southern United States. The six participants were selected to provide a purposeful sample to examine the experiences and perspectives of the targeted demographic through in-depth interviews. The articles in Chapter Four presented an exploration of the participants' experiences of their resilience and of the relationships that supported them in becoming resilient. This chapter explores the substantive theory developed from that examination, connects it to the literature explored in Chapter Two, and presents implications for researchers, teacher educators and practicing educators.

Review of the Study

The literature reviewed prior to the study's design explored two areas of significance: one related to barriers to academic success for Black students from low-SES families, and the second related to the factors that support the development of the resilience of Black students from high-poverty schools or low-SES families. As this literature provided the context for the study, the major points from both bodies of literature are briefly summarized below.

There are significant barriers to academic success for Black students from low-SES families. Group characteristics correlated to race include the increased probability for Black students to live in poverty, to lack stable housing, and to lack stable health care (Children's Defense Fund, 2012; Hertz, 2005; Tavernise, 2011). These factors all

have a negative impact on their academic achievement, as children who face chronic health problems or move often are more likely to struggle in school (Basch, 2011; Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, & Chen, 2012). In addition, the probability of Black students to live in poverty directly affects their academic achievement. Black children who live in a neighborhood with a high poverty rate have an average learning loss equivalent to a full year of school and high school graduation rates that are as much as 20 percentage points lower than those in wealthier communities (Children's Defense Fund, 2012). Poor and non-White students are also more likely to be placed in schools that have fewer resources, have fewer high-quality teachers, and have more student disciplinary actions (Hughes, Stenhjem, & Newkirk, 2007; Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001).

The literature suggests that the cultural divide between White teachers and Black students can also negatively affect teacher-student relationships and the academic achievement of Black students (Brown, 2008; Nieto, 1999; Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001; Smalls, White, Chavous, & Sellers, 2007; Webb-Johnson, 2002). Black males specifically face associated challenges connected with teacher-student relationships such as placement in special education for behavior-related incidents, grade retention, suspension, expulsion, dropping out, and violence (Davis, 2003; Garibaldi, 1992; Graybill, 1997; Griffin, 2002; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Levin, 2008; Monroe, 2005; Osborne & Walker, 2006).

Students who succeed in the face of significant challenges such as those described above are often said to be "resilient". In this study resilience is defined as a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000, p. 543). While we have well-documented

information about the characteristics of resilient students, we know less about how they develop those characteristics. The focus of interest for this study was not to characterize the characteristics of resilient individuals, but to examine the factors that support the development of resilience in youth (Davey, Eaker & Walters, 2003; Gardynik & McDonald, 2005; Peck, et al., 2008). A review of the resilience literature in Chapter Two indicated that resilient Black students living in poverty were characterized by the presence of supportive home relationships and supportive school relationships, both of which led to the individual supportive factor of self-efficacy (Borman & Overman, 2004; Cunningham & Swanson, 2010; Morales, 2008; Morales, 2010; Peck, et al., 2008; Wasonga, et al., 2003).

Supportive home relationships were identified by the presence of high parental monitoring and expectations and by parental work history and work ethic. Supportive school relationships were identified by the presence of caring school personnel (other than teachers) and positive teacher-student relationships. Little extant research, however, examines how these factors interact, and how that interaction is related to the development of resilience. In addition, most resilience studies are based on surveys and quantitative data, which do not capture the details of how students develop and experience resilience. The studies fail to address how students developed the characteristic of self-efficacy, or exactly what their supportive relationships looked like.

The current study was designed to investigate the process of resilience using the stories of resilient students. This study contributes to our understanding of the role that supportive relationships play in the development of resilience by offering a theory of resilience generated from interviews with resilient first-generation Black male college

students who graduated from high-poverty high schools and were currently attending a large, public, PWI.

For this social constructivist study, I conducted 12 interviews, two with each of the six participants. The grounded theory design of the study dictated a broad research question and broad interview questions in order to allow a substantive theory to emerge from the data. This study's research question was: What theory explains the resilience of first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools? To address this research question, I engaged in a constant comparative analysis of the interview data during data collection and used the analysis to guide the subsequent interviews. This process allowed me to explore themes as they emerged and to seek data from participants to confirm, refute, or elaborate on my interpretations.

I also attempted to decentralize my power through shared, collaborative data analysis with my participants. The collaborative data analysis consisted of individual member-checking of transcripts and a group dialogue around the themes that I saw emerging from their stories. The result was a grounded theory that offers an explanation of how supportive relationships contribute to the development of resilience in first-generation Black male college students from high-poverty high schools.

Findings

The theory generated from this study confirms the old adage, "It's all about who you know". Brené Brown, a grounded theory researcher who studies worthiness and vulnerability, made a similar statement about the development of hope. "Hope is not an emotion, but hope is a cognitive, behavioral process that we learn when we experience adversity, when we have relationships that are trustworthy, when people have faith in our ability to get out of a jam" (Brown, 2013). Replace the word "hope" with the word

“resilience”, and you have a close-to-accurate description of the protective factors involved in developing resilience. For these participants, the development of resilience was supported at every stage of their lives by their relationships. Findings indicated that as previously suggested by the literature, family and school relationships were crucial in providing much-needed support. However, external support was also identified as a key factor in this study, specifically in form of community mentoring groups and religious organizations. All three of these relationship types contributed to the development of self-efficacy, previously identified as a key element of resilience. (See Appendix C for a description of each type of support.) Findings from the study are presented as three manuscripts. A brief summary of each is provided here, followed by overall conclusions from all three articles.

The first article examined the school support that supported resilience in these participants. They described the importance of having a personal relationship with a teacher who recognized their abilities and challenged them. They listed being in an honors or advanced class as a supportive factor that provided them with excellent teachers. Their personally invested teachers were then a factor in the development of their academic work ethic. School administrators who acknowledged the challenges that the participants faced, while expressing confidence in their abilities and providing services such as mailing in scholarship applications, were another key factor in the nurturing of their resilience.

The second article examined how the definition of parental involvement described by the participants expands on the traditional definition of parental involvement held by many teachers (volunteering at the school, attending teacher-

parent conferences, etc.). Despite the connection of parental involvement to academic success, differing perceptions between teachers and parents of the definition of the term can be connected to low academic achievement of low-income Black students. Parental involvement was described as crucial to the statistically exceptional academic achievement of the participants, and they described their parents' involvement in three home-based ways: instilling the values of education and hard work, setting high expectations, and enforcing strict discipline. This expanded definition of parental involvement led to specific suggestions for teachers who are interested in nurturing a connection with their students' parents: teachers should discuss with parents how they talk about the value of education and hard work with their children; teachers should not assume that their students' parents can or should help with their homework; and teachers must share the high expectations that their students' parents hold for them.

The third article examined the factors that scaffolded the resilience of the participants with the goal of creating a grounded theory of resilience for Black male students from high-poverty schools. The three categories of protective factors identified by the participants (family support, school support, and external support) were organized in a framework of hardiness (a psychological term similar to resilience). This framework was composed of three characteristics of hardiness: commitment (wanting to be involved with others rather than isolated), control (developing a sense of agency over one's surroundings), and challenge (wanting to learn from all experiences, rather than avoiding risk). This article used the framework to examine the dynamic interaction among the protective factors that arose from the data. (See Appendix D for a graphic of this interaction.) The resilience of the participants was enabled by their interactive

relationships with and among family members, school personnel, and community members. Without the impact of one group on another (for instance, the parents' insistence that their children develop personal relationships with their teachers), one isolated category of protective factors may not have been effective. It was the combination and interaction of the protective factors that supported these students' resilience.

As examined above, the findings from this study suggest that these students were supported by a network of relationships and that their interactions created a web that held them up and enabled them to become resilient. Those relationships were described in detail in Chapter 4, so the following statements provide a brief summary of the major conclusions from the study, connect them to the literature, and provide implications for the field of resilience research. This will be followed by implications for future research and for teacher educators and practicing educators.

Conclusion 1: The teachers of these students nurtured their resilience through recognizing their abilities, challenging them, personally investing in their achievement, and making personal connections between the students they were teaching and their curriculum.

The results of this research affirm the importance of a positive teacher-student relationship (Brown, 2008; Nieto, 1999; Slaughter-Defoe & Rubin, 2001; Smalls et al., 2007; Webb-Johnson, 2002). While this study does not attempt to claim that it was the most important factor in developing resilience, as some scholars claim (Borman & Overman, 2004), it certainly played a large supportive role. Teachers helped the students learn to become autonomous in learning through a gradual release of

responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). In other words, they set a high standard, expressed their belief that the students could reach that goal, and provided the support that students needed to reach it, but the amount of support provided decreased over time as the students became more capable. Because the students believed that their teachers cared about them and believed in them, they were inspired to actively participate in and to improve their own education. Their resilience was nurtured through the presence of caring relationships, high expectations, and appropriate scaffolding as suggested in previous research (Benard, 1991).

Conclusion 2: School administrators helped nurture students' resilience through providing higher-level classes, recognizing the challenges the students faced, expressing confidence in their abilities, and providing services such as assistance with college applications.

While many Black students in high-poverty schools face a distorted negative perception of their abilities, these students were supported through the presence of supportive administrators and through assignment to higher-level classes. The students' assertion that being in these classes provided them with opportunities that students in lower-level classes did not have aligns with recent research suggesting that ability grouping harms students in lower tracks and has profound negative equity effects (Hattie, 2008; Mathis, 2012). The National Education Association supports the elimination of tracking, and claims that it "channels poor and minority students to low tracks where they receive a lower quality of instruction" (NEA, 2013). In 2011, Black students made up 19 percent of the U.S. school population but only 10 percent of gifted classes, a slim 1 percent increase from the percentage enrolled in gifted classes in

2005 (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2006, 2012). The participants could see the disparity between their classes and those in regular tracks, and while they were grateful for their opportunities, they acknowledged that their success was tied to them in a way that made it more difficult to achieve success if one did not have those opportunities.

The positive experiences that these students had with supportive administrators allowed them to find help where they needed it most in order to achieve academic success. Although previous resilience research has examined how school administrators can create an environment that supports teachers' resilience (Benard, 1991; Lugg & Boyd, 1993), further research is needed to examine how relationships with administrators can support students directly.

Conclusion 3: Parents helped nurture the students' resilience through instilling the values of education and hard work, setting high expectations, and enforcing strict discipline.

The findings of this study affirmed that parental involvement is crucial to academic achievement, as previous research has suggested (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Fan & Chen, 2001; Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007; Knopf & Swick, 2007). The way that these parents were involved supported the importance of expanding the traditional definition of parental involvement. The students' definition of their parents' involvement aligns with previous studies of Black parents' perception of their role in advocating for their children's academic success: setting clear and consistent behavioral rules, engaging in frequent and meaningful conversations, encouraging independence, and expressing high

expectations (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Jackson & Remillard, 2005). Further research is needed in this area to determine how best to open communication between teachers and parents, especially where there is a cultural divide between the two (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Delpit, 1995; Desimone, 1999).

Conclusion 4: The male community members who supported these students, such as mentors or religious leaders, helped nurture their resilience through investing in their success, providing motivation and guidance, and instilling in them a sense of divine purpose in their lives.

The presence of supportive community members has been examined as a potential protective factor that fosters educational resilience (Benard, 1995). Participation in some form of mentorship program impacted participants' self-esteem and their ability to continue to be engaged and successful in school. Half of the participants received mentors through Take Stock in Children, a non-profit organization started in 1995 that provides mentors and college scholarships for selected low-income students in Florida, and all of the participants mentioned being involved in religious programs of some type. All of the community mentors assigned to the Take Stock in Children students were male, and all of the religious leaders mentioned by these students were male, which aligns with Morales' (2008) finding that gender plays an important role in the efficacy of mentorship for Black male students. However, the participants in the current study also reported finding support from female school personnel. The participants noted that their most powerful relationships were with teachers who were caring, challenging, and who believed in their ability, regardless of gender or race. In fact, many of the participants specifically described White female

teachers who were honest about the challenges facing Black male students and who encouraged students to overcome those challenges. In some cases, the participants saw their teachers as mentors, but many saw their role as providing support, rather than mentorship. Therefore, the role of gender in the relationships between Black male students and their teachers and how gender impacts those relationships would be a good area for further exploration.

The students' description of how their church families supported them is closely related to previous research on resilience and spirituality, which suggests that religious belief may support the development of resilience through creating positive attachment relationships, such as a relationship with God that takes the place of a relationship with a missing parent; creating social support through peer relationships, counseling, and a sense of community belonging; providing guidelines for conduct and moral values; and providing personal transformational opportunities, through conversion, worship, or a reframing of past trauma (Crawford, Wright, & Masten, 2006).

Implications for Future Research

As this research study ends, it is important to consider avenues for future areas of study that will continue to provide insights to improve the school experiences and to develop the resilience of Black male students in high-poverty schools. One such avenue that was beyond the scope of this research would be to design a study that follows a group of Black male students over an extended period of time. Interviews with students at different ages, starting in high school, would provide a more nuanced and elaborate understanding of how they were supported in developing resilience. Longitudinal studies of resilience also provide an opportunity to examine resilient and non-resilient students

from similar areas in order to isolate protective factors when other factors are similar (Cowen, et al., 1997; Werner & Smith, 1992).

A second possibility could be a more traditional empirical study involving an intervention designed to increase the resilience of Black male students in high-poverty schools. This intervention might focus on any of the aspects from this study, including the recommendations listed below for teacher educators and practicing educators. A quantitative study examining the impact of a resilience intervention on the academic achievement and engagement of students could provide confirmation of important school-related factors that make a difference in the lives of students.

A third area of further research could involve the impact of family discipline on academic achievement. All of the participants identified the strong discipline of their family members as a crucial factor in the nurturing of their resilience. These findings build on Cunningham and Swanson's (2010) finding that high parental monitoring was more clearly related to the academic resilience of Black high school students than the factors of school support and future expectations. Cunningham and Swanson found that a direct correlation existed between high parental monitoring and the development of academic self-esteem. This was also true for these participants, who may not have liked the strict discipline of their family members when they were younger, but could still reflect on the ways that it eventually made them able to take charge of their own lives and enact self-discipline especially in the area of academics. The structure of discipline enacted by their family members created an attitude of circumspection for the participants, and a maturity that allowed them to set up a structure of discipline for themselves once they moved away to college. Further research in this area could

examine the factors of a strict discipline structure in the home that support students in developing self-discipline once they leave the home.

A fourth area for study involves a possible limitation of this study. Because the number of participants was too large for an in-depth qualitative analysis or ongoing interviews in the brief time period that exists for completion of a dissertation, there are many cultural and demographic factors that went unexamined. Two of the participants were Haitian, and one was biracial (Nicaraguan and African-American). One participant was raised by a single father, one participant was raised by a single mother, and one participant was raised by a matriarchal family composed of a grandmother, mother, and aunt. How do these factors impact the overall findings of the study, and their implications for the nurturing of resilience? More in-depth case studies of a smaller number of students would address this issue and provide for a clearer examination of how these factors impact resilience.

A fifth area for future research involves another possible limitation of the study: the fact that all of the participants reported having strong family support. For students who do not have this support at home, can relationships with school personnel and community mentors take up the slack and support students in developing resilience? As this study suggests that the dynamic interaction among all three types of support (school, family, and external) created a web of support that supported the participants' resilience, future studies could examine what happens when one area of that web disappears. For Felipe, when his mother died and his father was struggling financially, the support from his teachers and community liaisons at his school was enough to keep

him going. Future studies could do an in-depth analysis of if this is the case for other similar students.

A final area for further study involves the defining the term “parental involvement”. This study reveals that teachers and parents may hold very different definitions of this term, although both groups would agree on its importance to academic achievement. The literature on expanding the definition of parental engagement or involvement already exists, but future studies on professional development designed to enable White teachers to support culturally informed parental engagement with the parents of their non-White students would be beneficial.

Recommendations for Teacher Educators and Practicing Educators

While this study falls within the field of teacher education, the conclusions stated above focus on the impact of the participants’ relationships, both inside and out of school. This section reframes the findings to suggest recommendations specifically for teacher educators and practicing educators to support them developing the resilience of their students.

First, this study suggests that teachers and administrators can narrow the achievement gap and support the development of their students’ resilience through developing personal relationships with and challenging their students. The first part of that equation must precede the second, however. Without a personal relationship, students are much less likely to want to put in the effort for a teacher with high expectations. As this study suggests, students must know that their teachers recognize their ability as an individual first. Administrators can support this recognition by increasing the number of students in higher-level classes or by eliminating tracking altogether, as well as by creating those personal relationships with students directly.

Second, this study suggests that teachers and administrators can narrow the achievement gap and support the development of their students' resilience through broadening their definition of parental engagement. As stated in the previous section, holding different ideas about what it means to be an involved parent can lead to a dangerous disconnect between teachers and parents. When teachers consistently reach out to parents and make a special effort to build a relationship with them, teachers can broaden their ideas about how parents can support student achievement, and help parents become more effective in ways that are consistent with their definitions of parental involvement. This can all positively impact students' achievement.

Third, this study suggests that teachers and administrators can narrow the achievement gap and support the development of their students' resilience through partnering with community programs that provide mentorship for their students. School-family-community partnerships have been suggested as potential sources of the protective factors that foster educational resilience in children (Benard, 1995; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 1995; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1997). In fact, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) mandated the development of school-family-community partnerships in Title I schools. However, these programs have not been implemented in many areas. Florida is one exception with its Take Stock in Children (TSIC) mentoring program, as described in the conclusions section above. TSIC students currently have a 92 percent high school graduation rate (Take Stock in Children, 2013).

TSIC has experienced this success through connecting their program directly to middle and high schools, and schools wishing to replicate this success rate would do

well to use their program as a model, especially as the presence of Black men as mentors has been shown to have a positive impact on the identity development, schooling persistence, and academic achievement of low-income, urban Black males (Mitchell & Stewart, 2012). However, TSIC, while partially funded through state allocation, is heavily dependent on private donations and reaches only a fraction of students who need this kind of mentoring and support. Given studies that show that adolescents who reported having a mentor at any time since the age of 14 have a greater likelihood of completing high school and attending college, increased attention to and expanded support of mentoring programs is warranted (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005).

Conclusion

This study contributes to the knowledge base regarding the resilience of Black male students from high-poverty schools. The findings of the study demonstrated that the dynamic interaction of the supportive relationships in these students' lives nurtured their resilience. The theory generated by this study offers insight into how schools, parents, and community members can contribute to that development of resilience and expands our knowledge regarding possible ways to counteract one of the biggest problems facing schools today: the achievement gap between Black and White students.

APPENDIX A
LITERATURE REVIEW CHART

Citation	Purpose of research	Participants and Method	Supportive Factors in Developing Resilience
Borman, G. D., & Overman, L. T. (2004). Academic Resilience in Mathematics among Poor and Minority Students. The Elementary School Journal, 104(3), pp. 177-195.	To identify the individual characteristics that distinguished academically successful, or resilient, elementary school students from minority and low-socioeconomic-status (SES) backgrounds from their less successful, or nonresilient, counterparts.	Final sample was reduced to 925 students, of whom 26% were African American, 32% were Latino, and 43% were White. The parents of these children, on average, had 1991 to 1994 household incomes between $7,500 and $14,999 and had completed schooling through the eighth to twelfth grade (or GED). Longitudinal design, which tracked the mathematics progress (because minority students remain underrepresented in math) of low-SES children from third through sixth grade. Method: standardized	Student engagement had biggest effect size for supporting the resilience of all low-SES students. A more supportive school environment was associated with all students' academic resilience. A safe and orderly school environment and positive teacher-student relationships were the characteristics that mattered most, but low-SES White students were much more likely to attend these schools than low-SES Black students. We found some evidence that the resilience of low-SES minority students was more dependent on attending an effective school (where learning time is maximized, student learning is monitored, clear school goals are created and maintained, and principal leadership is strong) than was the resilience of low-SES White students.

		achievement scores in math and questionnaires from national congressional study	
Boykin, A. W., & Noguera, P. (2011). *Creating the opportunity to learn: moving from research to practice to close the achievement gap.* Alexandria, Va: ASCD.	Evidence-based framework of research on the achievement gap, answering three questions: Does the achievement gap narrow under a certain condition, which contrasts with conditions under which the gap does not narrow? Do students in general seem to benefit from this practice? Do lower-performing students benefit comparatively more from this practice than high-performing students?	Literature review	1. Most connected to student achivement: student engagement (students' level of persistence, eagerness to learn, and attentiveness) 2. Adaptive learning postures: beliefs about learning that will promote positive academic outcomes • self-efficacy • self-regulated learning • incremental ability belief 3. Asset-focused strategies: "learning exchanges that build on the assets students bring…rather than penalizing learners for not knowing the material" (p. 69)

Cunningham, M., & Swanson, D. P. (2010). Educational Resilience in African American Adolescents. The Journal of Negro Education, 79(4), 473-487.	The purpose of this article was to examine factors within the school context that facilitate educational resilience among African American high school students.	206 Black high school students (135 female, 71 male) 46% in single-parent households “working poor” = one family member is employed, income is at or below poverty line 43.6% of the mothers completed high school or some college 68% of mothers had a paid job during the students’ childhood Method: surveys completed in school	academic self-esteem “feeling competent, optimistic, and valued” (p. 484), school support (defined as support from teachers, administrators, or club/sports coaches), high parental monitoring *positive correlation between mother's work history and school support in developing academic self-esteem Mother’s work history could be representative of “a home environment in which education is not only valued but is part of the students’ socialization experiences within the family” (p. 483). “For some students experiencing stressful events, school is a safe place where they can focus on enhancing existing areas of academic ability and where competence can be demonstrated” (p. 483).

Morales, E. (2008). Exceptional Female Students of Color: Academic Resilience and Gender in Higher Education. *Innovative Higher Education, 33*(3), 197-213.	What significant differences, if any, exist in the academic resilience processes of high achieving low socioeconomic male and female college students of color; and as a result, what can be concluded about perspectives and processes that are unique to females? For this study, "significant" difference was set as a minimum of 75% of one gender reporting that a given phenomenon was essential to their success with fewer than 50% of the other gender reporting the same phenomenon.	50 college undergraduate participants attending PWIs: 31 were female and 19 were male, with 30 self- identifying as African American and 20 as Hispanic. • Each student had parents with limited educational backgrounds (high school graduates or below) • 52% from single-parent homes • Each student had completed a minimum of 30 college credits and had a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (using a four-point scale). Phenomenological study utilizing in-depth interviews – three 90-minute interviews with each participant	77% of females reported having caretaker expectations and responsibilities that affected their schoolwork and dealt with that in two ways: by doing more to get both the caretaker expectations and academic expectations done, or by dismissing the expectations 93% of females had specific post-college professional goals along with realization of how what they were doing academically would help them reach those goals "Given the resistance and at times hostility that the female participants faced, it is logical that they may internalize the belief that their success would require more energy and effort than that of the males. Therefore, by necessity, the focus and drive to succeed would increase." (p. 206) • Significant protective factor: caring school personnel at K-12 and college level ("any adult who takes a particular interest in the participants and helps guide them in a way that contributes significantly to their academic achievement." p. 207) • For males, 87% of those mentors were also male, making having a mentor of the same gender a significant positive factor

Morales, E. E. (2010). Linking Strengths: Identifying and Exploring Protective Factor Clusters in Academically Resilient Low-Socioeconomic Urban Students of Color. *Roeper Review, 32*(3), 164-175.	The focus is on uncovering and exploring how key protective factors may have worked together at various stages to mitigate the negative effects of risk factors.	50 academically resilient low-socioeconomic students of color 50 college undergraduate participants attending PWIs: 31 were female and 19 were male, with 30 self-identifying as African American and 20 as Hispanic. • Each student had parents with limited educational backgrounds (high school graduates or below) • 52% from single-parent homes • Each student had completed a minimum of 30 college credits and had a minimum grade point average of 3.0 (using a four-point scale). Phenomenological study utilizing in-depth interviews – three 90-minute interviews with each participant	Two distinct clusters of protective factors arose from the data. These consisted of groups of protective factors that were identified as working in an interrelated and supplemental fashion by a minimum of 65% of the participants. *Cluster 1. "It's Okay to be Smart": Skillful Mentoring for Future Success* (a) willingness/desire to "class jump" (move up in social class; 94%), (b) caring school personnel (K–12 = 90%, college = 72%), (c) sense of obligation to one's race/ethnicity (68%), and (d) strong future orientation (86%): emphasizing prospective goals over immediate gratification The desire to class jump was often encouraged by academic mentors who served as an "effective *cultural translators*, literally and figuratively translating the academic language into words and ideas that the students could under- stand readily" (p. 168). They would convince students that success would not mean betraying one's race but instead would allow for them to be in a position of supporting their communities. "Students sometimes, either consciously or subconsciously, do things to thwart their success in order keep themselves from leaving their peer group and having

			to join the dominant majority. For the resilient students in this study, reports of conscious self-sabotage were relatively rare (38% of males and 12% of females)." (p. 168) *Cluster 2. Pride, Debt, Effort and Success: Becoming Someone* The protective factors are (a) strong work ethic (90%), (b) persistence (94%), (c) high self-esteem (92%), (d) internal locus of control (92%), (e) attendance at out of zone school (76%), (f) high parental expectations supported by words and actions (80%), and (g) mother modeling strong work ethic (74%). "High parental expectations supported by words and actions refer not to parents' general and isolated commentary that they wanted their children to do well in school but rather to specific and explicit assertions about, and commitments to, educational goals and ambitions, as well as actions that gave weight to their words. Perhaps the most stark and common example of the value of these parental actions in support of education were participants' reports of both their parents' sacrifices and their proactivity in helping them avoid their local zone schools and helping them attend out of zone

			specialized or Catholic schools. All of the participants who did attend nonzone schools identified attendance at these schools as a key protective factor. When the students spoke of their parents' expectations and support, it was often in regard to facilitation of their attendance at these schools." (p. 169) "These students were very aware of their histories and often felt that their academic achievement somehow addressed and mitigated the racist transgressions characterizing American history by defying stereotypes and exceeding expectations." (p. 171)
Peck, S.C., Roeser, R.W., Zarrett, N., & Eccles, J.S. (2008). Exploring the Roles of Extracurricular Activity Quantity and Quality in the Educational Resilience of Vulnerable Adolescents: Variable- and Pattern-Centered Approaches. *Journal of Social Issues, 64*(1), 135-	This study explores the extent to which patterns (quality) of extracurricular activity involvement, independent of the amount (quantity) of activity involvement, contribute to the unexpectedly positive educational attainments of adolescents who are otherwise at risk for dropping completely out of formal educational systems. Used *lifespace configurations*: adolescents' cumulative portrait of personal and	520 students: 49% female, 60% Black – longitudinal study, data taken from end of 8th/beg. of 9th grade, end of 11th grade, 1 year after HS graduation, and 3 years after HS graduation Method: youth and caregivers (usually mothers) completed 2 interviews and 1 survey (youth completed 2 surveys)	50% of youth were characterized by educationally vulnerable lifespace configurations Black males tend to be overrepresented within that group (57%) " We consider any activity pattern or amount of activity involvement that increases such a probability above the subgroup base rate of 56% as reflecting a potential "health promotion factor" in which youth are "deflected" onto a pathway characterized by a greater-than-average chance of attending college." (p. 143) Seventy percent of vulnerable youth whose 11th-grade positive activity profile was marked by high levels of both school and community sports

156.	social risks and assets "Importantly, we do not replace the focus on quantity with a focus on only quality; rather, we consider simultaneously how both (a) the amount of time vulnerable youth spend engaged in positive activities and (b) the pattern of time use across these activities relate to educational pathways into adulthood. Specifically, we investigate whether vulnerable adolescents' participation more than once a week in any type of "positive activity" is sufficient to explain their educational resilience or whether some types or patterns of relatively frequent positive activity involvement are more beneficial than others." (p. 138)		activity went on to college. Eighty-six percent of vulnerable youth whose 11th-grade activity profile was marked by high levels of engagement in sports and community-based clubs, homework, reading, chores, school clubs, volunteer services, and hanging out with friends went on to college. Eighty-three percent of those engaged in sports and school clubs alone went on to college. What defines these activities? Appropriate structure, positive social norms, and opportunities for skill building (Eccles and Gootman, 2002) ** "What is lacking, at this point, is a more detailed analysis of the precise nature of the positive features of these activity settings and the mechanisms by which these features (a) are produced by the social agents responsible for managing these settings and (b) influence the education-related motives, skills, and knowledge that are central to keeping vulnerable youth on track educationally." (p. 149)

Wasonga, T., Christman, D.E., & Kilmer, L. (2003). Ethnicity, gender and age: Predicting resilience and academic achievement among urban high school students. *American Secondary Education, 32*(1), 62-74.	Are there significant differences in academic achievement by ethnicity, gender, or age? What factors predicted resilience among urban high school students by ethnicity, gender and age? What factors predicted academic achievement among urban high school students by ethnicity, gender and age?	480 ninth and twelfth grade students Method: 56-item questionnaire Eleven protective and resilience factors included in the analysis were home caring relations, home high expectations, home meaningful participation, peer caring relations, peer high expectations, school caring relations, school high expectations, school meaningful participation, community caring relations, community high expectations and community meaningful participation.	Among Black/African American students, a model with two variables Home Meaningful Participation, and Home High Expectations, explaining 53.3% of the variance predicting resilience was selected. Among Black/African American students, support in terms of Peer Caring Relations was negatively and significantly related to academic achievement while Home High Expectations was positively and significantly associated with academic achievement. The model explained 36.1% of the variance.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. I'm sure you can think of many other students from your neighborhood or high school who didn't make it to college, and you did. What do you think accounts for that?

2. Tell me about what your experiences were like in school.
    a. What kind of student were you?
    b. What was it like being a student there? (probe for school characteristics) What are some key memories that stand out to you as important?
    c. In what kind of academic track were you? (*regular, remedial, honors)* How did you feel about your track placement?
    d. Were you involved in extracurricular activities? If so, which activities? What are some key memories that stand out to you from extra-curricular activities?
    e. What was your peer group like? What are some key memories that stand out to you about your group of friends?
    f. Did you feel "connected" to your school? Explain—what does it mean to be connected? What made you feel connected?
    g. Can you think of a teacher in your middle or high school who was really good at supporting you academically? What did she/he do that was different from teachers who weren't as good at this? Was this teacher only helpful with you, or was she/he helpful with many Black students? How do you know? What made this teacher so good?

3. Did you always know that going to college is what you would do after high school? If yes, how did you know this? If not, when and how did you decide that you were going go to college?

Probes:

- Do you remember a time when you thought, "I *am* smart. I *could* go to college"? Tell me about that.
- Are there any individuals who influenced your decision to go to college? (*probe about family, school, friends, other adults in the community*)
- What experiences specifically influenced your decision to go to college?
    - Probe for experiences in and out of school
    - Probe specifically for experiences in high school

4. Do you feel that you were prepared for college? Why or why not?

    a. Tell me about an experience you had that you think really helped you be prepared for college. Any others?

b. Were there experiences that you felt were not helpful? Can you give me some examples?

5. Did your parents or other family members play a role in your path to college? Tell me about that. Can you share any specific memories that help me understand this family member's role in your life?

6. Other than your parents or whoever raised you, do you have a mentor who you go to for support and guidance (explain: someone has more experience than you and who as taken a special interest in you, may be a teacher, a relative, a neighbor, or someone else whom you look up to for support or guidance)? Tell me about that person and the role he/she plays in your life. Do you have any specific memories about things you did/do with that person?

7. As Black students from high-poverty high schools at a major university, you may be seen as "beating the odds". Describe your perspective of that identity.

8. What do you think teachers did that got you to a place where you could be successful in college? Are these factors important for all students/just Black students/just for you? Are there more things teachers could have done to support students like you?

9. Do you know any Black students from your neighborhood who were just as smart as you but didn't go to college? Tell me about them. (Probe for: Why has your path been different?)

10. We've talked about lots of things through our interviews. You've specifically mentioned each of the following factors as important in your path to success: [list them]. Are some of these more important than others? Which ones and why?

11. What else should I ask you if I want to understand your background and your journey to UF?

APPENDIX C
FINAL CATEGORIES WITH INITIAL CODES

Category: Family Support (FS)

Having parents who valued education
Having parents with high expectations
Having a parent who enforced strict discipline
Knowing that your parents believed in you
Having parents who gave responsibility
Having parents who valued hard work

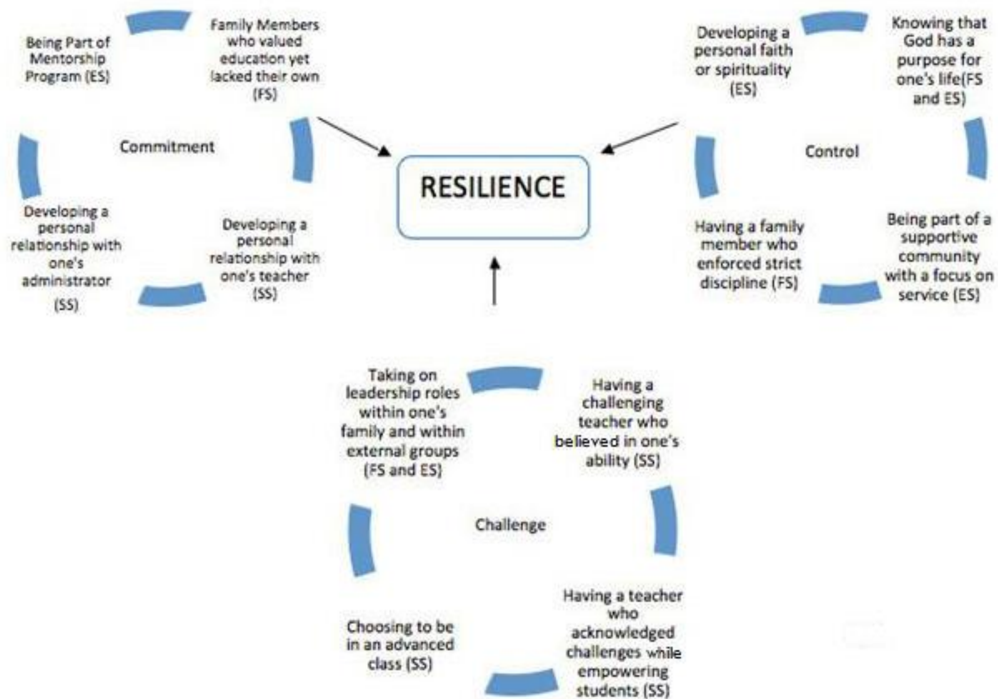
Category: School Support (SS)

Having a supportive school administrator
Having a challenging teacher
Knowing that your teacher believed in one's ability
Having a personal relationship with one's teacher
Having a teacher who taught "real-life" examples
Being tracked into a gifted or honors program

Category: External Support (ES)

Being part of a community mentoring program
Having a mentor who could share information that parents could not
Being part of a religious organization

APPENDIX D
DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAM



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lauren Tripp Barlis is a triple Gator. She received her bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Florida in 2002, her master's degree in English education from the University of Florida in 2005, and now her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Florida in 2013. She taught high school English and theatre for three years in Baltimore County, Maryland before returning to school for her doctorate. Those years in the public high school classroom created a passion for educational equity that has been the driving force for her research and work ever since.