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Academically Resilient Minority Doctoral Students Who Experienced Poverty and Parental Substance Abuse

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Walden University
2014

Abstract

Academically Resilient Minority Doctoral Students Who Experienced Poverty and Parental Substance Abuse

by

Marcia Boatman

MS, University of Phoenix, 2009

BS, Grand Valley State University, 1995

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

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Abstract

There is a lack of research on the academic resilience of minority, first-generation, online doctoral students (MFOD) who experienced poverty and parental substance abuse (PSA). The purpose of this study was to explore how MFOD who overcame poverty and PSA developed academic resilience. Resilience theory and Kember's model of attrition in online programs provided a conceptual framework for this study. The research questions guiding this qualitative study concerned how MFOD perceive and interpret their academic resilience and protective factors. A purposeful sample of 6 students participated in semistructured interviews. An interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted, which included a case by case analysis, and a cross-case analysis. Results indicate that academic resilience is perceived as (a) determination, (b) evolving realization of the value of education, (c) paving the way for others, and (d) leveraging strengths to succeed in an online doctoral program. Protective factors are perceived as (a) resilience in adversity, (b) mindset about school, (c) identity resilience, and (d) transformational experiences. The results of this study reveal that the participants learned to see themselves beyond the context of their immediate environments. Positive social change implications include improving existing social policy to aggressively target high-poverty school districts and communities with PSA. More specifically, at-risk minority students would benefit from targeted interventions focused on family engagement in education and school retention.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my mother, Charlene Blake, who, due to the devastation of substance abuse, did not survive to see me graduate from high school. My courage to finish my Ph.D. was grounded in the love and hope that did not die with her, but grew exponentially within me. I also dedicate this to my beautiful children: you were my inspiration throughout this journey. And finally, I dedicate this to minority students of all ages and academic levels who have experienced poverty and parental substance abuse. May you find the strength to redefine your struggle as something to propel you forward rather than hold you back, and in doing so, find the courage to finish your academic journey.

Acknowledgments

I could not have done this on my own. First, I give God glory for enabling me to complete this program. To my husband, thank you for your flexibility and understanding. You believed in me and supported me. Thank you for your patience.

I am very grateful for the time and commitment of each of the 6 participants who allowed me to journey with them back through their past. Together we researched your trouble and embraced your triumph. May your lives be a thread in the tapestry of social change.

Last, but not least, I want to acknowledge my dissertation committee and other supportive Walden faculty. Dr. Gregory Hickman, you have challenged and inspired me academically in ways I never thought possible. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for valuing diversity and having genuine concern for helping students. Thank you for your energy to move forward, this kept me going more than you will ever know. Dr. Tina Jaeckle, you are the first faculty member I met face to face. You told our cohort that not all students who begin this journey finish. Your words motivated me to work hard throughout this program. Every time you challenged me to rewrite something, I learned something new. Thank you. Dr. William Barkley, thank you for all your help in the Human Services mentoring forum. The forum added value and meaning to my experience at Walden. There is a saying that it takes a village to raise a child—I believe it takes strong faith, strong family, and strong faculty to raise a Ph.D. graduate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The completion of an online doctoral degree demonstrates a high level of academic resilience. A lack of long-term motivation and the inability to manage personal crises while remaining engaged with school are common issues that can influence doctoral students' decisions to withdraw from their programs of study (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Minority doctoral students potentially experience additional risk factors. Five common challenges that lead to the marginalization of minority doctoral students include: (a) nonminority faculty members who are not interested in their research (Felder & Barker, 2013; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011); (b) an internal struggle with revealing their true feelings and beliefs to their nonminority faculty advisors (Gildersleeve et al., 2011); (c) the lack of minority support groups within the university (Gildersleeve et al., 2011); (d) overt racial and cultural slander by nonminority students (Felder & Barker, 2013; Gildersleeve et al., 2011); and (e) the internal struggle with accepting the norms of an institution that does not value diversity (Felder & Barker, 2013; Gildersleeve et al., 2011). Additionally, minority doctoral students could belong to other groups with high attrition (Lee & Choi, 2011; Woosley & Shepler, 2011). While there is research examining attrition, little is known about how minorities exposed to cumulative risk persevere in education to reach the doctoral level.

In this study, I will explore the academic resilience of minority first-generation online doctoral students (MFOD) who experienced poverty and parental substance abuse (PSA) growing up. There are multiple reasons why online doctoral students withdraw from school (Engstrom & Tinto, 2008; Nichols, 2010). Students who experience poverty

and PSA are less likely to be academically resilient, due to the multiple risk factors they have experienced (Grogan-Taylor & Woolley, 2010; Hall, 2010). There is higher attrition among MFOD (Gofen, 2009; Lee & Choi, 2011; Morales, 2010). Also, student entry characteristics, along with the university environment and relationships with faculty and peers, contribute to a student's success (Kember, 1995). Understanding the process of academic resilience of this population would contribute to positive social change through the development of targeted interventions to lower attrition rates among minority at-risk students (Terrell, Snyder, & Dringus, 2009) who have experienced poverty and PSA. Additionally, I will provide recommendations for future research based on the results of this study.

Chapter 1 provides background information on poverty and PSA statistics, along with discussion of the social problems that intensify when poverty and PSA co-occur. I will also present the research problem, research questions, and general background information on the conceptual framework and research methodology.

Background

Poverty is a comprehensive problem that is linked to multiple negative consequences. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), 15% of the total United States population lives in poverty, which includes 9.8% of non-Hispanic Whites, 25.3% Hispanics, 27.6% Blacks, and 12.3% Asians (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2012). Poverty negatively impacts the neurobiological development of young children, impeding healthy adult mental and behavioral health outcomes (Duncan, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2010; Oshio, Sano, & Kobayashi, 2010; Wynn, Fite, & Pardini, 2011). Other social problems

associated with poverty include increased risk for the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Carvalho, 2012; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009), underperforming schools (Yoshikawa et al., 2012), low educational attainment (Vandsburger, Harrigan, & Biggerstaff, 2008), incarceration, long-term use of food stamps or cash assistance, higher high school dropout rates (Legters & Balfanz, 2010), higher rates of teen pregnancy (Yoshikawa et al., 2012), domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, community violence, substance abuse, and PSA (Dunlap, Golub, Johnson, & Benoit, 2009; Scaife, 2008; Wadsworth et al., 2008). Health-related risk factors for children and adults associated with poverty include higher instances of asthma, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, tooth decay, depression (National Center for Health Statistics, 2011), and HIV (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2012). For students who are academically resilient, education can help break the cycle of poverty (Cavanaugh, 2008). Although researchers have explained the consequences of poverty (Carvalho, 2012; Dunlap et al., 2009), little is known about the process of academic resilience among minority students exposed to poverty and other co-existing problems.

Certain poverty risk factors increase the chances that other risk factors will occur. When poverty and PSA co-occur, prostitution, homelessness, and child abuse and neglect are more likely to be present (Gilchrist & Taylor 2009; Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2009). Additionally, PSA exposes children to psychological damage through the complex behavioral problems that exist in the home environment, such as domestic violence (Klostermann & Kelley, 2009; Ostler, Bahar, & Jessee, 2010), exposure to vehicular accidents, adolescent substance abuse (Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2009), and severe emotional stress associated with unstable living situations (Enoch, 2011). Due to the complex nature of problems that emerge when poverty and PSA are present, it can be difficult for a student to remain engaged in school. In addition, the presence of substance abuse does more damage to families and communities than poverty alone.

Parental substance abuse is a growing concern due to the increase of drug use throughout the United States. In 2011, there were 3.1 million first-time drug users and 22.5 million individuals (8.7%) 12 years and older who used drugs in the month prior to the survey (SAMHSA, 2012). In addition, there were an estimated 8,400 new users a day (SAMHSA, 2012). From 2002-2007, an estimated 8.3 million children were cared for by at least one parent with a substance abuse problem (SAMHSA, 2012). Teens exposed to PSA are twice as likely to drink and three times more likely to smoke cigarettes and marijuana (CASA, 2013). The concern is that PSA precipitates adolescent substance abuse. Therefore, students exposed to PSA are at risk for experimenting with drugs or alcohol.

Although the consequences of poverty can be devastating, substance abuse also has negative outcomes. Substance abuse negatively impacts families as well as the U.S. economy (SAMHSA, 2012). For example, substance abuse and related disorders cost the United States an estimated quarter of a trillion dollars annually in health care costs (CASA, 2013). During 2002-2009, the number of infants suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), due to opiate dependent mothers, tripled (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2012). A healthy baby remains in the hospital for up to 3 days,

whereas an infant with NAS remains in the hospital for an average of 16 days due to multiple health complications, costing an estimated $720 million, mostly paid by Medicaid (NIDA, 2012). In addition, the federal and state governments spend 60 times more on programs to address the impact of substance to children than on prevention and treatment for children (CASA, 2009). For each dollar spent on prevention, $59.83 is spent on programs to address the social impact of substance abuse (CASA, 2009). These findings imply that PSA continues to negatively impact health and social outcomes, increasing the risk of low educational attainment for students who are less resilient. The pervasive problem of addiction in the family could also contribute to generational substance abuse problems. Individuals who abuse substances are less likely to have a college education, more likely to be unemployed, and more likely to have been on probation (SAMHSA, 2012). There is a need to for prevention and intervention to help impoverished families at risk for PSA.

Due to the risk factors associated with both poverty and PSA, students reared in this type of environment face compound risks. Researchers indicate that school failure is a significant negative outcome associated with poverty and PSA (Enoch, 2011; Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009; Scaife, 2008; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). In addition, the co-occurrence of poverty and PSA increases the threat of intergenerational transmission (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009; Wadsworth et al., 2008). There can also be negative consequences associated with PSA into adulthood (Balsa, Homer, & French, 2009; Braitman et al., 2009). Therefore it would be difficult to establish policies and practices to help facilitate the academic resilience of students who live with these co-

occurring issues. Yet higher education could be their best chance to break the cycle of both poverty and PSA in their own lives. However, there is a gap in the literature on the academic resilience of MFOD who have experienced PSA.

The academic resilience of MFOD who have experienced poverty and PSA is significant to understanding the academic resilience of at-risk minority students in general, because the majority of minorities attend schools where there is a higher population of impoverished students, higher drop-out rates, and the lowest percentage of college-bound students (Oseguera, Conchas, & Mosqueda, 2011). Some of the other significant obstacles minorities encounter in higher education reveal (a) higher attrition among minority doctoral students (Gardner, 2008; Gildersleeve et al., 2011); (b) higher attrition among first-generation college students (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Woosley & Shepler, 2011); (c) higher attrition among online students (Lee & Choi, 2011); and (d) minority students are more likely to have experienced poverty and PSA (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2012; SAMHSA, 2012). Also, minority students are more likely to be first-generation students (Gofen, 2009). However, some minority students are academically resilient and pursue and acquire doctorates in spite of opposition (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). There is a lack of research on how MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA become academically resilient. Gaining this knowledge can contribute to the development of targeted interventions for at-risk students who have experienced poverty and PSA.

Problem Statement

Effective policies and interventions to promote the educational attainment of at-risk students require an understanding of the development of academic resilience. Minority first-generation online doctoral students who experienced poverty and PSA growing up are academically resilient. They have overcome risk factors that increased their chances of academic attrition (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2012; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Lee & Choi, 2011; Woosely & Shepler, 2011). Because of those economic, academic, and social challenges (Morales, 2010), online students are more likely to withdraw (Lee & Choi, 2011; Terrell et al., 2009). Therefore understanding the academic resilience of online doctoral students with a history of risk would advance existing resilience research. The problem is a lack of research on the academic resilience of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA.

Purpose of the Study

Students exposed to risk factors associated with low educational attainment who persevere and complete school are considered academically resilient (Morales, 2010).The purpose of this interpretive, phenomenological study was to explore the development of academic resilience of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. Academic resilience was the central phenomenon of this study. According to seminal research in resilience theory, risk hinders proper development, and protection decreases the impact of risk (Garmezy, 1996). In this study, I explored the participants' experience of risk and protection within the context of their childhood, adolescence, and their academic journeys.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do MFOD who experienced poverty and parental substance abuse perceive and interpret their academic resilience?
2. How do MFOD who experienced poverty and parental substance abuse perceive and interpret their protective factors?

Conceptual Framework

Several concepts and models formed the conceptual framework of this research. Kember (1995) developed a model conceptualizing drop-out from online programs. Kember illustrated that the entry characteristics of college students predispositioned them to either be successful or unsuccessful, both socially and academically. Successful social and academic integration led to program completion. Unsuccessful social and academic integration was the equivalent of social and academic incompatibility. Furthermore, the latter was usually attributed to external factors believed to be beyond a student's control, which may lead them to drop out (Kember, 1995). In the literature review, I present multiple studies on how the tenets of Kember's model present in the lives of students.

Because the factors that promote academic resilience are subjective and vary based on each individual (Morales, 2010), a qualitative approach was used to explore students' lived experiences. Resilience theory provided a lens for understanding the phenomenon of academic resilience. Risk and protective factors introduced to a person genetically or environmentally can increase or decrease the chances that a person will progress to psychopathology (Garmezy, 1993; Rutter, 1999). Morales (2010) discovered

that internal and external protective factors contribute to the academic resilience of impoverished minority college students. According to human capital theory, education creates opportunity for economic growth through equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills that lead to employability and innovation (Mincer, 1981). These theories, concepts, and models are the conceptual framework for this research and provided a lens for understanding both academic resilience and the need for research within this specific population of individuals.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative study was completed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore the academic resilience of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. Participants were selected using a snowball sampling method. This included using the Walden Research Pool, as well as social media and written letters. A phenomenological approach allowed for the exploration of common experiences in order to reveal unique factors that contribute to the occurrence of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012). Therefore, IPA was used to describe, interpret, and position the lived experiences of the participants (Smith et al., 2012) within the existing body of research on MFOD.

Definition of Terms

Doctoral student: A student currently enrolled in a doctoral or Ph.D. program.

First-generation student: Students who are the first generation in their immediate family to pursue and complete an education at a college or university, and whose parents have less than a college education (Gofen, 2009).

Minority: For the purposes of this study, a minority is defined as any member of an ethnic or racial group that is not considered a Caucasian in the United States.

Online program: Any program of study that takes place online and outside of the traditional classroom setting. Online learning implies that the majority of the program must be completed online (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

Parental substance abuse: Parental substance abuse is defined based on the *DSM-IV-TR* (2000) criteria for substance abuse. At least one parent or main caregiver had to meet at least one of the following five criteria within a 12-month period: (a) recurrent substance use that interfered with parental responsibilities at home, school, or work; (b) recurrent substance use in physically hazardous situations; (c) recurrent substance use-related legal problems; (d) recurrent substance use-related medical problems; or (f) continued use despite a pattern of social or interpersonal problems due to substance use. Eligible participants would remember their parents experiencing at least one of these criteria for at least a year, rather than a one-time or occasional episode of use that did not negatively impact the participant or household.

Poverty: For the purposes of this study, poverty is defined as meeting at least one of the following six criteria, long-term, during childhood: (a) received free or reduced lunch, (b) family received food stamps, (c) lived in the projects, (d) lived in a low-income or high-poverty community, (e) recalls extended periods of having insufficient basic

needs (food, clothing, or medication), or (f) experienced homelessness or recalls frequent transitions characterized by insufficient living arrangements or living with other people due to the inability of being able to afford housing (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009; Legters & Balfanz, 2010; Wadsworth et al., 2008; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). Using these criteria, poverty would have been experienced long-term rather than being a one-time, short-term situation.

Assumptions

1. Participants will answer all interview questions honestly.
2. Participants are able to reflect on their life histories and recall the socioeconomic context they grew up in as it relates to poverty and PSA.
3. Participants plan to complete their doctoral programs.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included the phenomenon of academic resilience among MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA growing up. Therefore, the lived experiences participants shared were analyzed only as they related to academic resilience. Although this study was open to any racial minority group, six Black doctoral participants were eligible to participate. Due to the nature of this study and the narrow population, the findings are not meant to be generalized.

Limitations

The sample size is a limitation of this study. Smaller sample sizes allow for depth rather than breadth in the exploration of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Additionally, IPA researchers recommend sample sizes between four and 10 participants (Smith et al.,

2012). Six Black doctoral students were selected to be interviewed for this study. Another limitation of this study was geographic location. There were four telephone interviews, and two face-to-face interviews with the two clients who lived near me.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for multiple reasons. Higher education increases the human capital needed for social and economic mobility (Petrenko & Galitskaia, 2010). Minority doctoral graduates could help advance this nation by contributing to research and innovation in diverse fields of study (National Science Foundation, 2013). However, the co-occurrence of poverty and PSA negatively impacts the educational experience of children and adults (Enoch, 2011; Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009; Reddick, Welton, Alsandor, Denyszyn, & Platt, 2011). In addition, this topic is inherently significant because adult child-survivors of PSA have higher attrition rates in college than adult children with no history of PSA (Hall, 2010). Online institutions with doctoral programs need to understand the issues affecting the academic achievement of at-risk populations that could potentially lead to drop out (Gardner, 2008; Terrell et al., 2009). When doctoral online students drop out, it negatively affects the reputation of the university, the emotional well-being of students, and causes financial losses for both the student and institution (Kember, 1995; Lee & Choi, 2011; Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

Furthermore, exploring the lived experiences of doctoral students exposed to risk throughout their lives reveals the scope of their academic resilience at multiple levels of education. Therefore, understanding the experience of academic resilience among this

unique population can provide suggestions for future research, as well as program and policy development for primary, secondary, undergraduate, and higher education for both traditional and online programs. Traditional universities may develop doctoral online programs, as well as secondary and undergraduate institutions, that meet the needs of their at-risk learners (Gardner, 2008; Lee & Choi, 2011). Positive social change implications include the development of targeted interventions at multiple levels of education geared toward student retention for at-risk minority students.

Summary

Chapter 1 has provided background information on the rationale for researching the academic resilience of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. It has been estimated that minorities will comprise 50% of the population in the United States by 2050 (Weaver, 2011). A larger percentage of minorities than nonminorities live in poverty and have substance abuse problems in the United States (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2012; HHS, NSDUH, 2012). Moreover, substance abuse and poverty are problems that are often transmitted across generations (Carvalho, 2012; CASA, 2013, Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). The United States spends nearly a quarter of a trillion of dollars each year on substance abuse-related health costs, which does not include the money spent on unemployment and legal issues related to substance abuse (CASA, 2013; HHS, NSDUH, 2012). Substance abuse problems expose individuals of all ages to health, social, and economic risks (CASA, 2013). As individuals acquire an education, they increase in human capital (Mincer, 1981) and reduce their chances of experiencing poverty (Cavanaugh, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics

(NCES), 2012). Furthermore, income increases with the level of education (NCES, 2012). Therefore, it is beneficial to the socioeconomic well-being of this nation for minorities to pursue higher education.

Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth synthesis of the literature to uncover many of the challenges that the unique population explored in this research encounter in the pursuit of higher education. The qualitative design and methodology will be presented in chapter 3. Data collection, management, and analysis will also be presented in the third chapter, along with an explanation of why other qualitative designs were not suitable for the research problem presented in this study. Chapter 4 contains a detailed explanation of the case-by-case and cross-case analysis. Included are broad and specific codes and the answers to the research questions. Chapter 5 brings closure to this research study with the interpretation of the findings in the context of the conceptual framework used in this study and the existing literature. Also, the chapter will include the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and the implications for social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. There were no quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method studies on this problem within this unique population of individuals. The primary goal of the literature review is to reveal how a proposed research study is situated within the existing body of scholarly research (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).Therefore, what follows is a comprehensive review of the literature on each of the identifying criteria for this study. In this analysis, I provide a context for understanding the problem, which is a lack of research on the academic resilience of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. Chapter 2 will include an explanation of research strategies used and a review of the literature related to following identifying criteria:

1. *Academic resilience:* Research about academic resilience was reviewed to determine what is already known about this phenomenon among minority first-generation students, online students, and doctoral students. Afterwards, conclusions were drawn about the academic resilience of MFOD.
2. *Minority first-generation college students:* Researchers who have studied the experiences of minority first-generation college students revealed the challenges of being the first person in the family to attend college. While there is a lack of research on MFOD, the literature on minority first-generation college students will provide a sufficient context for understanding some of the challenges that face MFOD.

3. *Online:* Research on attrition and achievement in online programs provided a context for understanding problems specific to this population of students.
4. *Doctoral students:* Research and statistics explaining factors contributing to attrition among doctoral students provided a context for understanding where the literature is lacking in regards to the population explored in this research study.
5. *Poverty:* An overview of current statistics from U.S. government agencies and research studies related to the impact and experience of poverty, including the impact of poverty on achievement for children and adults.
6. *Human capital theory:* Research on the benefits of education, such as the development of human capital. This research provided understanding that education leads to the socioeconomic mobility of impoverished individuals (Mincer, 1981), and is a pathway out of poverty (Cavanaugh, 2008).
7. *PSA:* Statistics and research on the impact of substance abuse and PSA at the individual, family, community, and national levels. Poverty and substance tend to co-occur together, thus complicating the home environment and increasing risk to children (Enoch, 2011; CASA, 2013).

Search Strategies

The topic researched in this paper involved overlapping fields of study; therefore, multiple databases and several combinations of keyword searches were used to locate scholarly and peer-reviewed articles. Within the Walden library, the following databases were searched: EBSCO, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, ERIC, Education Resource Complete, Political Science Complete, and MEDLINE. Additionally, Sage

journals, ProQuest Central, and Academic Search Complete were searched. Google scholar was also searched in combination with Ulrich's Periodical Directory to eliminate non-peer-reviewed journals. A comprehensive mixture of the following keywords were used within the aforementioned databases (along with Boolean identifiers): *parental substance abuse, parental alcoholism, parental addiction, substance abuse, parent, drugs, resilience, academic resilience, protective factors, risk factors, academic, achievement, drop out, school failure, educational attainment, adult outcomes, adult children, human capital, economics education, social mobility, minority higher education, doctorate, distance education, online, targeted intervention, intervention, doctoral student support, attrition, at-risk, poverty,* and *family.* In addition, a search was conducted using names commonly found in the literature, such as *Norman Garmezy, Michael Rutter, Erik Morales, Kember, Masten, Tinto,* and *Mincer.* What follows is a review of the literature arranged by the characteristics of the population studied and the conceptual framework of this study.

Resilience Phenomenon

In this study, I explored academic resilience as something manifested in the lives of individuals. Heidegger (1962) examined the lived experiences of participants through phenomenology. He explained that a phenomenon is something which is manifested or revealed in itself and is likened to a sickness made manifest through symptoms (Heidegger, 1962). Therefore, the aim of this study was to discover the symptoms and experiences of individuals who are academically resilient. Resilience is the ability to

recover to an adaptive state after exposure to risk factors that makes a person vulnerable to psychopathology (Garmezy, 1991; Howell, 2011; Mullin & Arce, 2008; Rutter, 1999).

Competency is the productive adjustment to normal life changes, whereas resilience is the display of competency after adverse experiences (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Additionally, competency is difficult when the cumulative presence of risk, rather than a single stressor, significantly increases the likelihood of psychopathology (Garmezy, 1993; Haggerty & Sherrod, 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Rutter, 1979).

Risk is a concept derived from epidemiology that describes factors that create or prevent disease (Garmezy, 1996). Vulnerability is a condition that distinguishes risk factors that cause psychopathology (disease) from resilience, which is a condition of overcoming risk (Garmezy, 1996). The impact of risk factors is moderated through intrinsic or extrinsic protective factors (Gore & Eckenrode, 1996). For example, Shepherd, Reynolds, and Moran (2010) conducted a phenomenological study with six females who experienced adverse situations in adolescence, ranging from teen pregnancy, sexual abuse, death of a parent, and intimate partner violence. The participants were asked to reflect on one adverse experience; however, Shepherd et al. revealed that adverse experiences were nested within larger adverse experiences. The researchers also indicated that each participant described reaching a breakthrough moment in their lives due to the risk factor being removed, as the participant took on a different perception of themselves and the situation itself through academic achievement in college and the rebuilding of healthy relationships. The risk factors were not as damaging as they could have been because of the presence of protective factors (Shepherd et al., 2010). The

results of this research indicate that education functions as a protective factor for some at-risk students. Therefore, academic achievement can potentially motivate students who experience poverty and PSA to have a positive perception of themselves.

Academic Resilience

A better understanding of the development of academic resilience could bring more clarity on how to help students who are disengaged from school. Heidegger (1962) purported that a phenomenon must be defined in order to distinguish between the actual phenomenon and the resemblance of the phenomenon. Therefore research is needed to help confirm what defines, develops, and deters academic resilience among students in environments with poverty and PSA. Resilience is a phenomenon that characterizes competency in multiple domains of functioning (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). In addition, academic resilience is seen as a measurement of success in certain cultures (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). To investigate the impact of academic resilience among different groups, Wynn et al. (2011) examined which environmental factors influence transition into adulthood using a sample of 397 19- and 20-year-old Black and White men. For both racial groups, internalizing, externalizing, and a poor parent-child relationship were associated with poor adult adjustment. Also, White participants' poor adjustment was influenced by a lack of organizational involvement, such as belonging to religious or social groups. However, Black participants were at greater risk for poor adjustment if they experienced academic failure (Wynn et al., 2011). This implies that persevering in education promotes resilience in other areas for Black males. Different protective factors promote resilience to different degrees among various racial and

cultural groups. In addition, the experience of achievement is a protective factor that empowers some at-risk students to excel (Shepherd et al., 2010). When at-risk students are academically resilient, and reach higher levels of education, they are empowered to end the cycle of dysfunction in their lives.

At-risk students who learn to cope with risk are the ones who can become academically resilient. Students must adapt in a balanced manner in both social and academic domains within educational institutions (Tinto, 1975). Additionally, a student's ability to adapt is determined by his or her personal, familial, and educational pre-college experiences (Tinto, 1975). This is significant for minority first-generation students who grew up in poverty and experienced PSA, because they are more likely to have attended poor schools (Legters &Balfanz, 2010) or experienced some form of maltreatment (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009). Academic resilience occurs when students use internal and external strengths to overcome the adverse pre-college experiences that impede educational attainment, in order to successfully adapt to the social and academic demands of higher education (Howell, 2011; Morales, 2010). Exploring the development of academic resilience is beneficial to helping other at-risk students (Morales, 2010) through the development of targeted interventions that protect against risks that cause poor outcomes (Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008). Additionally, minority first-generation nontraditional students frequently encounter challenges in higher education that traditional students do not (Campa, 2010). Based on this, it is necessary to understand how they develop academic resilience.

Minority First-Generation Higher Education Students

Minority first-generation higher education students are likely to have challenging pre-college experiences that their families may not be equipped to help them through. The willingness to be in the first generation implies they resist the intergenerational pull towards low educational attainment in order to pursue social mobility (Gofen, 2009). However, their resilience becomes more complicated with each risk factor introduced. In the remainder of this literature review I will examine the literature related to poverty and PSA, and their potential impacts on minority first-generation students. Morales (2010) conducted a qualitative study to explore the academic resilience of 50 minority low-income first-generation college students. Results of the study provide insight into the most common risk and protective factors and these findings are also supported by other research.

Financial deprivation

The first common factor among first generation college students is the experience of poverty. Morales (2010) reported that 96% of students reported lack of money as a major risk factor, this included growing up poor, having inadequate educational materials, and attending poor schools. First-generation higher education students are more inclined to have grown up in a low income family (Gofen, 2009). However, 94% reported their obligation to family as the protective factor that enabled them to overcome poverty. Students were motivated by the adversity their families faced, and this promoted academic resilience (Morales, 2010). These findings indicate that, although the impact of

poverty does not cease when minority first-generation students begin college, the experience of poverty can motivate students to gain a higher education.

Other researchers have discovered similar findings. Castro, Garcia, Cavazos Jr., and Castro (2011) conducted a qualitative study exploring the academic success of seven female doctoral students. The researchers discovered that the participants attributed academic resilience to changing their perspective about their circumstances, and a desire to get away from the domestic violence they witnessed growing up (Castro et al., 2011). Gofen (2009) conducted a qualitative grounded theory study with a sample of 50 students to discover how first-generation students break the cycle of low educational attainment. The results consistently indicated that the family provided more protection than teachers or any other form of support. Parents communicated to their children that education was a way out of poverty and a way to have a better life than they had (Gofen, 2009). Families can provide support and increase students' belief that they can break the cycles of dysfunction and low educational attainment in their own lives. In addition, if parents have a deeper understanding of the value of education, they can influence their children. Campa (2010) explored the academic resilience of Mexican-American first-generation college students from low-income families. The researcher discovered that parents taught their children that education was the key to helping their communities and overcoming the adversity of previous generations (Campa, 2010).

The perspective of parents can influence and shape the perspective of students. Although the parents of first-generation students may not have a college education, the literature reveals that parents can be positive role models for these students (Campa,

2010; Gofen, 2009; Morales, 2010). Also, access to opportunities offered protection against risk, and could promote academic resilience. Other common protective factors that helped students overcome the lack of money was attending better schools that were located in other communities (Gofen, 2009; Morales, 2010), educational relationships established in non-school settings (Wikeley, Bullock, & Ridge, 2009), and scholarships (Hu, 2011; Morales, 2010). These opportunities are human capital investments that can be the difference between poverty and success for some students.

Pressure to represent

Minority first-generation students also experience challenges related to the evolution of their identity. In essence, they are attempting to be something different than the majority of people they grew up around. Morales (2010) discovered that another major risk factor among 92% of the students was the pressure to undo the negative stereotypes associated with one's race or cultural group. This included bearing the burden of stereotypes associated with attending inner-city low-performing schools (Reddick et al., 2011). Students frequently experienced being "caught in the middle" between the need to achieve academically and the need to remain true to one's cultural group (Castro et al., 2011; Morales, 2010). For instance, when students developed different world views and language upon attending college, others sometimes saw this as abandoning their roots (Morales, 2010).

Protective factors that offset this risk include having positive relationships with educational leaders and a different perspective about being true to one's cultural group (Morales, 2010; Palmer, Maramba, & Elon, 2011; Woosley & Shepler, 2011). For

instance, students who viewed obtaining a higher education degree as positioning themselves to help their cultural group were more likely to be academically resilient (Morales, 2010). Additionally, educational leaders such as professors, counselors, and mentors encouraged students to see that the higher purpose of education was to help their families and communities (Campa, 2010; Morales, 2010). Academically resilient minority first-generation students must have a mindset that allows them to be different than everyone else in the environment they grew up in. However, this may be difficult because, in many ways, they are similar to their family and peers.

Unprepared for higher education

One of the ways minority first-generation students might resemble the peers they grew up with is in the value of the education they received. According to Morales (2010), poor pre-college experience is another major risk for academic failure. More specifically, 88% of the students did not receive the quality of education needed to put them where the nonminority nonfirst-generation students were (Morales, 2010). Additionally, it is not uncommon for first-generation students to lack quality study skills when they enter higher education (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). Tinto (1975) and Kember (1995) both reported that attrition from higher education and online institutions can be attributed to inadequate pre-college experiences. Other research has highlighted this issue among minority students at different academic levels.

Social and academic integration is influenced by different internal and external factors. Woosley and Shepler (2011) conducted a quantitative study based on Tinto's model with 804 first-generation students at a four-year college to examine how pre-

college experiences influence social and academic integration into higher education. Only 106 participants were minorities. The researchers found that social and academic integration, institutional satisfaction, and homesickness-related distress were influenced by campus environment, commitment to education, academic skills, gender, and admissions test scores (Woosley & Shepler, 2011). A limitation of this study is that it did not highlight the factors or distinctions between the social and academic integration of minority students.

However, Severins and Wolff (2008) focused on Tinto's model in relation to the social and academic integration of minority versus majority students. The researchers conducted a study using a sample of 523 students from different institutions to compare the number of credits and the social and academic integration of minority and majority students. The researchers discovered that minority students obtained fewer credits and lower grades than majority students. Yet the authors concluded that there was no evidence that minority students were less integrated due to their minority status. Moreover, the authors asserted that minority students were just as integrated as majority students; however, integration did not mean students had the same experience. Therefore, a significant finding of this study is that students in the same academic environment are impacted differently (Severins & Wolff, 2008). In addition, integration is a subjective experience that is relevant to the academic resilience of students in higher education.

Because successful social and academic integration reduces the likelihood of drop out in higher education, it is important to understand what buffets the risk minority first-generation students have experienced. Factors that protect against lack of pre-college

preparation include the factors that build human capital (Campa, 2010; Gofen, 2009; Palmer et al., 2011), such as a strong internal locus of control, parental support, and a strong work ethic (Morales, 2010). Additionally, being in protective and academically engaging environments strengthens the internal protective characteristics students already possess (Morales, 2010). This implies that students who are somewhat academically resilient increase in resilience due to exposure to a supportive environment. Palmer et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study to explore the academic resilience of six minority students in a predominantly White science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) institution. The researchers purported that academic resilience was more likely when students received additional support such as mentors, pre-college programs, and opportunities for research. While lack of a strong presence of minority faculty presented as a risk factor, protective factors included (a) peers with similar interests, (b) opportunities to work with STEM alumni on research, and (c) having attended STEM schools in high school (Palmer et al., 2011).

Role models and peers

Thus far, a consistent theme in the literature is the role of relationships in promoting academic resilience. However, relationships can also be demotivating for some students. The remaining two major risk factors common among students were non-academic peers (86%) and lack of educated or positive role models (84%) (Morales, 2010). Minority first-generation higher education students from low-income families and communities often have peers that do not pursue the same academic path (Morales, 2010). Students may believe they have more in common with their peers back home, and

less in common with their peers in college. Peer relationships influence social integration. Therefore, more understanding is needed about how academically resilient minority first-generation students perceive and overcome challenges associated with peer relationships.

Bradbury and Mather (2009) conducted a qualitative study using Tinto's (1975) model to explore the factors that promoted and hindered the social and academic integration of 9 first-generation low-income students. Results indicated that the most common factors were (a) loyalty to home, (b) academic adjustment, (c) social acceptance, and (d) economic hardship. More specifically, students expressed being torn between college friends and non-academic friends, particularly friends who engaged in risky behaviors that were obstacles to academic success (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). Protective factors that helped offset the challenge of non-academic peers were being self-motivated, having a strong future orientation, structured study habits, and authoritative parents (Morales, 2010). Additionally, academic peer relationships provided a scholarly community where students could build and develop good study habits (Palmer et al., 2011). Therefore, although students may struggle with the transition to new peer relationships, researchers have found that peer relationships established in college are protective factors. These relationships might also function to help minority first-generation students accept their new identity.

In addition to peer relationships, mentors and role models can also contribute to social and academic integration. Role models or the lack thereof provide impactful risk or protection (Morales, 2010). The literature provides a mix of results related to the presence of role models (Bradbury & Mather, 2009; Gofen, 2009; Reddick et al., 2011).

More specifically, Bradbury and Mather (2009) reported that many students in their study initially struggled with relating to faculty but eventually realized faculty was invested in their academic success. In contrast, some students reported that teachers and counselors did not believe in them (Gofen, 2009); while others reported that counselors were either unhelpful or quite supportive (Reddick et al., 2011). Knowledge about peer relationships and role models is significant because relationships contribute to who a person becomes.

Online Learning

Several of the researchers previously mentioned conducted studies using Tinto's research as a conceptual framework. However, Tinto's work does not include online learning. Tinto (1975) developed a conceptualization of drop out from higher education emphasizing the link between a student's ability to academically and socially integrate into an institution and their decision to withdraw. He asserted that institution type impacts dropout rates in that different institutions admit different types of students. Additionally, he concluded that there is a lack of research on the association between race and attrition in higher education as well as looking at drop out patterns over time from different types of institutions (Tinto, 1975). This highlights the need for research on academic attrition and resilience from non-traditional settings, such as online programs.

Diverse racial and cultural groups experience social and academic integration differently. Therefore, research about attrition in online programs must take these differences into consideration. Kember (1995) proposed a model of drop out from online programs. When a student enrolls in an online program, 80% or more of the courses are offered online (Allen & Seaman, 2013). The number of students enrolled in at least one

online class increased from 1,602,970 in 2002 to 6,142,280 in 2010 (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Therefore more understanding is needed about how online students successfully complete their programs. Kember purported that many online students were adult learners who must make school fit into their busy schedules. Additionally, students were distanced from the campus environment and therefore social integration took on a new meaning. Furthermore, he reported that the norms at some institutions did not create an environment where minority students could successfully integrate (Kember, 1995). This highlights the need for research on how minority students succeed in an environment where the dropout rates are higher (Lee & Choi, 2011), and where many of the students would not be admitted into programs with formal requirements (Kember, 1995).

Entry characteristics

No two online programs are the same, so each institution should investigate its own internal and external threats to student success. Entry characteristics include individual qualities, previous educational experiences, and family background–together these characteristics influence a student's ability to successfully adapt to online education (Kember, 1995). Successful social and academic integration is evidenced by the student's grade point average and the decision to remain. However, when students attribute the inability to integrate to external situations, and they are unable to meet the academic requirements of the online program, drop out is often the result (Kember, 1995). Therefore, social and academic integration are key elements of academic resilience. In addition, MFOD have adapted to many adverse environments and people. These students

have remained academically resilient and have overcome the challenges of social and academic integration.

Social and academic integration

Social presence is a measurement of the sense of belonging among online students. Liu et al., 2009, conducted a quantitative study using a convenience sample of 108 students who were enrolled in an online community college. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether or not social presence predicted retention and high final grades. Where there was strong social presence, there was more likely to be academic persistence in the online learning environment. Results of the study indicated that social presence is positively related to successful course completion and higher final grades (Liu et al., 2009). Retention in online programs is more likely when students are socially and academically integrated (Kember, 1995). The results of this study indicated that social integration provokes academic integration when there is social presence (Liu et al., 2009). This indicates that when the social environment is accommodating, it develops a community of learners who are motivated to succeed.

Course completion or drop out

Students who succeed in online programs are internally motivated, and this may play a role in their perception of social integration. Other factors that contribute to social integration for the online learner include the family environment, motivation for enrollment, and commitment to study (Kember, 1995). In order to reduce attrition, online programs must identify and intervene to help at-risk students early in their program of study (Liu et al., 2009). Nichols (2010) conducted a comparison study of two cohorts of

first-time students in an online program. A baseline measurement of retention was taken in 2008 with first-time students and another measurement was taken in 2009 with first-time students with the retention intervention in place. The interventions consisted of an assessment measuring study readiness for online learning, an orientation teaching students online skills and time management, sending periodic support messages when assignments were due, and personal contacts for students deemed to be at risk. The researchers found that more students were retained during the year when the intervention was implemented. Additionally, students who dropped out attributed it to external factors, such as difficult courses, family issues, and time management. Students who were successful attributed it to internal factors, such as self-motivation, instead of the interventions. Although more students were retained during the year the intervention was implemented, the author concluded that students were not able to attribute this success to the intervention because they may have been unaware of how it influenced their learning experience (Nichols, 2010). Researchers state that student attributes, their home and work environments, as well as the structure of the online program, contribute to academic retention (Lee & Choi, 2011). In order to succeed in an online doctoral program, students need to find positive internal attribution.

Doctoral Students

Relationships with faculty play a large role in the social and academic integration of online doctoral students. Academic and professional norms and values are passed from doctoral faculty to students through the process of socialization, and this impacts social integration and retention (Felder & Barker, 2013; Gardner, 2010; Terrell et al., 2009).

Few studies on doctoral education look specifically at online programs. However, the literature indicates that doctoral students enrolled in online programs are more likely to drop out when they feel disconnected (i.e., unsuccessful social and academic integration) from their environment (Terrell et al., 2009). Although not looking at online programs, Gardner (2010) conducted a qualitative study using 16 doctoral professors to determine their perception of their role in socialization of students. Faculty members selected were among those who graduated the most students among the programs with the highest number of doctoral students. When asked directly about their role in socialization, faculty members did not believe they contributed to the informal socialization of students. However, when asked about different experiences, faculty members did in fact play a significant role in the informal socialization of doctoral students. Examples of informal socialization included mentoring, supervising, and social activities (Gardner, 2010). Doctoral faculty may not always be aware of the impact of these informal activities, and the fact that they contribute to doctoral students' social integration.

Minority doctoral students

Other research focused on the experiences of MFOD further reveals the connection between socialization and social and academic integration. Gardner (2008), conducted a qualitative study using a sample of 40 doctoral students. A common theme emerged which revealed that students believed they did not fit into the culture of the institution. Gardner termed this as not "fitting the mold," suggesting an inflexible predetermined social and academic structure that was inadequate to support minority students (Gardner, 2008). Attributing unsuccessful social integration to external factors

indicated that students were headed in the path of drop out from online programs (Kember, 1995). Specific external factors students reported were issues of sexism in male-dominated disciplines. Twelve of the female students were suffering from mental health issues and considering dropping out. Moreover, female students saw that institutions hired mostly men, and interpreted that as a lack of job opportunities for them upon graduation. Minority students felt they were being discriminated against, and older students felt that faculty made them feel unwelcome. Part-time students felt they were not receiving the same level of social and academic integration as full-time students. The results of this study reveal that institutions should be more flexible in order to accommodate the integration needs of nontraditional doctoral students (Gardner, 2008). Online programs were not the focus of this study. However, this research is related to Kember's (1995) model in that it confirms that when students struggle with social and academic integration, external factors impede their academic persistence.

When minority doctoral students feel isolated and unwelcomed due to the institutional culture of their programs, it could contribute to external attribution. Gildersleeve et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study using a sample of 22 Black and Latino doctoral students. The researchers used ethnographic methods and chose to focus on the culture of doctoral programs. "Am I going crazy" was the most common theme that developed from the interviews. More specifically, students reported (a) some faculty did not appreciate their research ideas when they were related to studying their own culture, (b) a lack of Black and Latino support groups on campus, (c) feeling singled out when they had to explain the actions of their race, and (d) being told to take a less

aggressive approach in the classroom (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). A lack of support in brick and mortar doctoral programs increased the risk of external attribution among students. Online doctoral students will not have the instant access to faculty or the same type of peer support as doctoral students who brick and mortar schools. Therefore, successful online doctoral students must remain internally motivated, and be able to overcome the obstacles related to completing an online program.

Minority students are more likely to complete their doctoral programs when faculty is supportive and shows genuine interest in their research ideas (Felder & Barker, 2013). Additionally, fewer minority doctoral graduates raise concern that there will ultimately be fewer doctoral faculty members (Felder & Barker, 2013). Fewer minority faculty could mean fewer potential mentors and role models for doctoral candidates. Doctoral students credited the lack of socialization to external factors (Gildersleeve et al., 2011), yet academic resilience is also partially attributed to internal factors (Kember, 1995). However, based on the previous studies presented, it is clear that minority and other nontraditional students experience negative external factors that hinder their social and academic integration (Gardner, 2008; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Terrell et al., 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to understand how students overcome the external factors that put them on the path to drop out.

While some doctoral students are unable to overcome external obstacles, others become motivated during adversity. Castro et al. (2011) researched the experiences of doctoral candidates, and found they attributed success to internal factors. For instance, internal locus of control, perseverance, and the belief that doctoral education gave them

purpose, motivated participants to remain in their programs. Also, participants reported that negative circumstances motivated them to complete school (Castro, et al., 2011). So although Kember (1995) separated social and academic integration from external attribution, this study indicates that students can experience the impact of external factors and yet be simultaneously socially and academically integrated (Castro, et al., 2011). Academically resilient MFOD exposed to poverty and PSA experience both social and academic integration, in spite of any external hardships they have faced. Due to their historical resilience, they are able to withstand the challenges associated with an online program.

Cumulative Stressors

The next sections will introduce the results of multiple studies that examine how poverty and PSA influence the academic resilience of children and adults. These findings will be used as a framework for identifying what the literature currently reveals about the academic resilience of students who experienced poverty and PSA. Cumulative stressors not only cause psychopathology, but they also impede the educational attainment of children (Rutter, 1979; Garmezy, 1991). In addition, resilience theory has established the fact that cumulative stressors increase risk for maladaptive behavior (Garmezy, 1993). The phenomenon of academic resilience is grounded in resilience theory, which focuses on the ability to recover, instead of developing psychopathology, after exposure to extreme risk (Rutter, 1999). Academic resilience describes the process of achieving academically through maximizing protective factors to minimize the impact of risk factors (Morales, 2010). The literature reveals that when poverty co-occurs with other

stressors, the risk to children is long-term and intensified, producing negative outcomes into adulthood (Enoch, 2011; Nikulina, Widom, & Czaja, 2011; Smith-McKeever & Gao, 2010). To explain the impact when poverty co-occurs with other stressors, it is beneficial to look at studies that address poverty as the main variable.

Poverty-Related Stress

The experience of poverty for students goes beyond financial lack. Consequently, understanding the economic dimension of poverty does not equate with understanding how poverty impacts the emotional well-being of people (Lipina, Simonds, & Segretin, 2011). For instance, knowing how many families in a neighborhood fall below the poverty line is not the same as understanding the short-term and long-term impact of poverty for the family (Lipnia et al., 2011). In addition to this, poverty impacts children differently than adults, and varies based on contextual factors (Lipina et al., 2011). The impact of poverty on the mental, emotional and behavioral health of children is complex and complicated when co-occurring issues exist (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). For instance, community poverty, impoverished school districts, and high teenage pregnancy rates are issues that frequently help perpetuate the cycle of poverty by increasing cumulative risk factors (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). These risk factors include low-quality or no social support, compromised parental capacity, and lack of access to much-needed resources (Lipina et al., 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). The result is an environment saturated with poverty-related stress. Therefore, organizations responsible for determining policies and practices for students who live in poverty must have an understanding of poverty beyond the lack of material resources.

Researchers have attempted to gain a better understanding of the subjective experience of poverty. Wadsworth et al. (2008) conducted a quantitative study to test a model which postulated that poverty negatively impacts the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of children through poverty-related stress. Researchers have already established that poverty has the potential to disintegrate the parent-child relationship, leading to negative social, emotional, and behavioral health outcomes for children (Yoshikawa et al., 2012). However, Wadsworth et al. (2008) purported there is a need to understand the mechanisms by which exposure to poverty produces vulnerability.

The sample consisted of 164 children ranging from 6 to 18 years of age and multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds, selected from the Colorado Project on Economic Strain (CoPES). Researchers measured the long-term consequences of poverty-related stress on the psychological and physical well-being of families (CoPES, 2008). Eligible participants were 150% below the poverty line, and receiving some form of public assistance. The researchers measured socioeconomic status, poverty-related stress, psychological disorders for adults and adolescents, behavioral health for children, physical health, academics, and deviancy. The results of the study indicated that poverty-related stress has long-term negative consequences on the physical and psychological well-being of children, including deviancy and school dropout (Wadsworth et al., 2008).

Although the literature claims that negative consequences of poverty persist, there is a lack of knowledge about how doctoral students have been able to overcome the consequences of childhood poverty, over and over again, in order to reach the highest level of education (Castro et al., 2011). Understanding how students overcome the

psychological and academic vulnerabilities associated with poverty is critical to understanding academic resilience.

Poverty and Academic Disparities

Long-term poverty can impede psychological health, which, in turn, has negative implications on educational attainment. Researchers have examined how poverty and socioeconomic status (SES) contribute to academic disparities (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Henry et al., 2011), educational choices (Mocetti, 2012), and children's experience of school based on their SES (Horgan, 2009). Students' beliefs about what they can accomplish is influenced by their experience of their SES. Promoting academic resilience involves helping students from lower SES to think beyond their SES. There is a connection between educational attainment and income (Horgan, 2009), adult attainment (Wynn et al., 2011), and overall well-being (Topitzes et al., 2009). The academic disparities that exist between students who attend wealthier and disadvantaged schools reveal how these differences begin to develop when children are young (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Horgan, 2009). Thus, MFOD exposed to poverty and PSA learned to overcome the pull towards lower educational attainment in childhood and were able to maintain it into adulthood. Also, at some point they believed they could break through the barrier of the SES of their family of origin. The meaning of education changes when students in poverty believe it can change the course of their lives.

How children perceive school based on SES. The foundation for the perception of education begins in childhood. Horgan (2009) conducted a qualitative study consisting of focus group interviews with 220 children in Northern Ireland. There were 56 groups

with four children in each group taken from six schools, two of which had low levels of students who qualified for free school meals (FSM), two had moderate levels, and two had high levels. Children were not aware of how they were divided into groups. Each group was shown photos of upper, middle, and lower class homes. Younger children were asked if they believed the children who lived in the homes would have the same or different experiences at school. Older children were asked more detailed questions to determine what types of things they believed the children or parents would be concerned about if they attended the school that child went to. In addition to this, children were questioned about why they should attend school in general (Horgan, 2009).

The results of this study indicate differences between how disadvantaged and advantaged children experience school. Beginning at the age of ten, the children's reasons for attending school in general began to vary. For instance, children from wealthier families associated education with being a good person, gaining knowledge to be able to help their own children with homework, getting good scores on college entry exams, and attending a university. On the contrary, children from less advantaged homes associated attending school with finding work, being able to survive, and knowing how to read and write (Horgan, 2009). These responses reveal that children's perception of education is linked to their perception of how education (or the lack thereof) has impacted their family life.

There was also a distinct difference in how children from different SES perceived school. Children from more advantaged families had positive experiences and reported more instances of creative learning experiences with teachers and impactful field trips.

However, children from disadvantaged homes verbalized how deprivation shaped their school experiences, and reported that teachers did not always teach the way they learned best (Horgan, 2009). Those students also mentioned they would prefer to be included in how a topic is taught, which suggests there are fewer opportunities for creative learning in the disadvantaged schools. Additionally, students from disadvantaged schools reported dealing with frustrated teachers, dirty playgrounds, and nasty food. Poor school environments and low teacher dedication detracts from the learning experience of students (Mocetti, 2012). It is not uncommon for teachers in disadvantaged schools to be weighed down with students who have multiple emotional and behavioral problems, and who may be malnourished (Horgan, 2009; Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

Children experience poverty as more than lack of money. Impoverished communities are more likely to have disadvantaged schools, and therefore children in poverty have a different educational experience than middle- or upper-class children. For instance, students believed that a child living in the bigger house would be treated better by teachers, be more popular, go on better field trips, and have more fun at school. Conversely, students believed that children in the smaller house would be picked on and not treated fairly. The author concluded that poor children have the burden of the impact of poverty on their families with them in school and that this impedes their ability to learn in the same manner as a child from a more advantaged family (Horgan, 2009).When schools lack the resources and effective strategies to overcome the challenges faced in impoverished schools, academic disparities are more likely to develop (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Horgan, 2009). Findings from this study are significant for this

qualitative study on academic resilience because they reveal that impoverished children develop academic resilience over time because they experience academic disparities at a young age. Disadvantaged children must be resilient in order to overcome the constant obstacles they face (Wadsworth et al., 2008)—obstacles that are embedded in their families (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009; Yoshikawa et al., 2012), schools (Horgan, 2009), and larger communities (Nikulina, Widom, & Czaja, 2011).

Educational choices. The previous subsection dealt with how children experience school based on their SES. This subsection will discuss research on how parents' education and employment influence children's educational decisions. Mocetti (2012) conducted a quantitative study to examine the factors that influence drop out in compulsory school and the educational choices of students who choose to remain in school. The structure of the school system in Italy is divided into primary, lower, and upper secondary years, which resembles elementary, middle, and high school in the United States. It is in the beginning of the upper secondary years where many students dropped out of school, which corresponds to the ninth grade (Mocetti, 2012). Therefore, this research is useful for further understanding the educational choices of students in the United States because most students who fail in high school do so in the ninth grade (McCallumore & Ervin, 2010). Additionally, students who continued in upper secondary school chose a more rigorous academic path, or technical or vocational paths. Each choice led to different outcomes in later life (Mocetti, 2012).

Data were selected from the 2004-2005 Labor Force Survey (LFS), which provides information on educational choices and labor market statistics from among a

representative sample. There were two different occasions of sampling from among the participants in the LFS. First, all 15 year olds were selected to examine the factors that influenced school delay; the second sample consisted of all individuals aged 15-19, to examine their educational choices at the conclusion of lower secondary school (Mocetti, 2012). A logit model was used to examine data from both samples. Results indicated that students who previously repeated a grade were 12 times more likely to drop out; and educational track choices were more influenced by the father's occupation and the parent's level of education. This infers that students are more likely to follow the educational and occupational paths of their parents. Also, when schools are unable to overcome the academic disparities of students from lower-income families, socioeconomic inequality is perpetuated (Horgan, 2009; Mocetti, 2012).

This study revealed that over 70% of students who repeated a year and remained in school were more likely to enroll in either vocational or technical schools rather than a university. However, children whose parents had achieved higher levels of education were more likely to pursue higher levels of education themselves (Mocetti, 2012). The literature continues to reveal the challenges that impoverished students encounter. Multiple studies have reported that understanding how to address the specific problems that sustain inequalities impeding lower-income students' academic progress is needed to inform prevention and policy (Grogan-Kaylor & Wooley, 2010; Henry et al., 2011; Horgan, 2009; Mocetti, 2012). Academically resilient MFOD who were exposed to poverty and PSA as children are determined to go beyond their parents' education and occupational levels.

Other factors that impede or facilitate academic disparities. Resilience is possible when protective factors present in the environment are strong enough to enable a child to overcome exposure to risk. However, resilience is complicated due to a child's exposure to multiple environments (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010) and the ability of genetic predispositions to influence how a child reacts to risks in different environments (Rutter, 1979). Grogan-Kaylor and Woolley (2010) asserted that impoverished conditions help maintain academic disparities. The researchers conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study using a representative sample of 2,099 middle and high schools students and an ecological and resilience framework to investigate the environmental factors that influence school outcomes among minority students. Results of this study indicated that family SES had the biggest influence on academic disparities (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010). Academic resilience for students exposed to poverty and PSA is more than doing well in school. It is also overcoming the factors associated with poverty and PSA that predisposition them to have lower educational attainment. More specifically, nonminority online doctoral students who grew up in middle- to upper-class families did not have to overcome the same obstacles as MFOD exposed to poverty and PSA. This does not mean that MFOD were not smarter, but they had to overcome roadblocks that support low academic achievement.

Parents can function as a protective factor to their children, thus building human capital and promoting academic resilience. Researchers indicate that parental investment in education can determine the extent to which SES negatively impacts learning (Henry et al., 2011). Therefore, parental engagement can lessen the impact of risk. Parental

investment is a multidimensional concept that involves a parent's perception of school, active involvement in the learning process, and willingness to facilitate opportunities for extracurricular activities (Henry et al., 2011). Using a sample of 64,350 students from 199 different rural school districts across the United States, Henry et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study to determine how parental investment mediates the relationship between SES and academic achievement. The researchers hypothesized that poorer students will have lower graduation expectations and that poorer school districts will have lower graduation rates. Results of this study indicated that poorer students lacked confidence that they would graduate, and poorer school districts had lower graduation rates. There was higher parental investment in the families with higher SES; however, for families with lower SES where there was parental investment, students had better academic outcomes (Henry et al., 2011). Understanding the process of academic resilience provides practitioners with tools to help parents of at-risk students from lower SES backgrounds promote academic resilience through engagement.

Although some lower-income parents may be limited in what they can offer, exposing their children to different opportunities builds human capital and fosters resilience. Wikely et al., (2009) conducted a qualitative study to explore how students from high and low SES experience after-school programs and to determine whether students from lower SES participated less in these types of programs. According to the researchers, learning communities provide opportunities for socialization that students cannot get in the traditional classroom setting. After-school programs provide positive learning experiences, help build self-esteem, build human capital, and provide students

with mentors. The results of this study revealed that students from lower SES were less likely to participate in after-school programs. However, many of the factors that prevented participation were linked to socioeconomic reasons such as lack of transportation and inability to afford costs (Wikely et al., 2009).

The previous studies discussed have provided a clearer picture of the types of experiences impoverished students encounter during their early academic experiences. Kember (1995) produced a model to explain the process of academic persistence in online programs that highlights the importance of entry characteristics. These are the students' perception of the past and present circumstances they bring with them into the educational setting. Pre-entry characteristics impact how well students integrate into the online setting and include the impact of earlier learning experiences. When at-risk students do not receive the help they need, pre-entry characteristics could potentially trigger a student to drop out (Kember, 1995). Fewer minorities complete their doctorates compared to White students (Gildersleeve et al., 2011). Therefore, understanding the academic resilience of MFOD will provide a foundation of knowledge relevant to minority doctoral students as well as minorities at all other levels of education.

Protective Factors in Poor Families

If parents of at-risk students can provide protection against risk, it can be asserted that families in poverty have internal strengths that support resilience. Vandsburger et al., (2008) conducted a qualitative study to explore the resilience of families in poverty. Three questions were asked of 128 participants selected from a Head Start program to uncover the strength, challenges, and coping skills of families. Over half of the

participants were White, between the ages of 20 to 49, and did not have a high school education. The highest percentage of family strengths reported were (a) love, (b) communication, (c) cooperation, and (d) family hope for a better future. Families can help instill a future orientation in children to promote resilience. The highest percentage of family risk factors were (a) economic stress, (b) poor life skills, (c) lack of parenting skills, (d) family discord, and (e) drugs and legal problems (Vandsburger et al., 2008). Poverty-related stress develops as a result of these types of risk factors (Wadsworth et al., 2008), impeding the adaptive, psychosocial (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009), and cognitive (Morales, 2010) development of children.

Other studies have shown that the conditions of poverty limit parental capacity to provide financial, emotional, and educational investments to the extent that children require them (Carvalho, 2012; Duncan et al., 2010). The highest percentage of family protective factors were (a) ability to problem-solve, (b) faith, (c) family cohesiveness, and (d) avoidance behavior. Only five participants reported seeking professional help as a means of coping (Vandsburger et al., 2008). Not all families in poverty seek help outside of the home. Most of the families in this study reported finding strength from within the family unit itself (Vansburger et al., 2008). If the families already have strengths without outside help, practitioners using a strengths-based perspective might have more influence with a family. In addition, this would help build human capital with the entire family, also promoting resilience.

Understanding family resilience provides a better understanding of individual resilience. Mullin and Arce conducted a qualitative study that consisted of three focus

groups with 16 social workers to explore their perceptions of resilience among impoverished urban families. Resilience was conceptualized as a family's ability to overcome brief or long-term conditions that typically cause impairment (Mullin & Arce, 2008). Therefore, resilience was seen as something developed from within the family unit and is consistent with the findings from Vansburger et al. (2008), that impoverished families find most of their strength from within.

Results indicated three main themes of resilience found among impoverished urban families: support, beliefs, and action (Mullin & Arce, 2008). Resilient families are willing to work together and know how to access help from neighbors and community organizations. Strong faith, positive thinking, and an internal locus of control characterize resilient families. The results indicated that resilient families perceived their problems differently and believed the family was stronger than the problems encountered. And finally, the beliefs of resilient families precipitated action through families advocating for themselves, which required families to navigate through social and political systems, working with people in the external environment as needed (Mullin & Arce, 2008). Mullin and Arce explored resilience from the perception of a professional on the outside looking in, and Vansburger et al. (2008) explored family resilience from inside the family. Both of these studies help further explain the need to understand the resilience of students born in homes where poverty and PSA co-occur, because PSA hinders a family's ability to maximize its strengths (Templeton, Velleman, Hardy, & Boon, 2009). There are more obstacles present in families with both poverty and PSA that students have to overcome to be academically resilient.

Human Capital

The process of academic resilience also contributes to human capital development. Human capital is the sum total of genetic similarities (Mocetti, 2012) plus skills individuals develop from interactions with family, school, and training that enable them to be successful in the workforce (Mincer, 1981). According to human capital theory, just as individual human capital promotes individual economic growth, national economic growth is the result of consistent, meaningful investments in human capital among the masses (Mincer, 1981). Investment in human capital begins as soon as children are born and begin to interact with the environment in home, daycare, or preschool settings (Mincer, 1981). SES is transferred to children through the level of human capital they receive (Carvalho, 2012). Long-term poverty diminishes well-being and mental health in parents, deterring them from providing the human capital needed to support higher academic achievement in children (Duncan et al., 2010; Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). The more opportunities and connections a family in poverty has, the more likely they would be able to provide some human capital investments to their children.

The development of human capital through education and training leads to higher incomes and better well-being (Becker, 1984). Yet impoverished children have less access to structured programs that would function as protective factors (Wikeley et al., 2009). Also, parents often lack some key skills that would help them become more invested in their children's education and social development (Henry et al., 2009). As a result, poverty decreases an impoverished family's ability to develop higher levels of

human capital (Duncan et al., 2010). Due to this, the cycle of poverty can continue as children experience lower educational attainment, less exposure to needed resources and opportunities, and therefore fewer human capital investments.

Investment in human capital is related to socioeconomic mobility. Because academic resilience also contributes to human capital development, it is also related to socioeconomic mobility. In a qualitative study on how families transfer SES across generations, Carvalho (2012) discovered that environmental and biological factors contribute to the development of human capital and help explain how SES is transmitted. The development of human capital accounts for income inequalities because individuals with more invested human capital have higher earnings (Mincer, 1981). For instance, higher-skilled and educated employees typically earn higher wages than less-skilled and low-educated employees (Mincer, 1981). Therefore, investment in human capital through education promotes the socioeconomic mobility of minorities who live in poverty (Gofen, 2009; Mincer, 1981; Mocetti, 2012).

The problem is not that impoverished families do not want to invest in human capital, but rather that they simply lack the opportunities wealthier families have access to. Although impoverished families may not be able to afford some of the programs that are beneficial to their children's social and academic development (Horgan, 2009), parents often find other ways to build human capital. Examples include consejos, which are strong words of encouragement that include family history about the struggle to survive (Campa, 2010). Also, some parents move to different communities where their children can attend better schools (Palmer et al., 2011**)**. Other nonmaterial resources

include positive moral values, teaching children the importance of reading books, and utilizing free community programs (Gofen, 2009). In short, investment in human capital reduces the chances of the cycle of poverty being repeated and improves the long-term outcomes for children born in poverty (Carvalho, 2012; Mincer, 1981).

Poverty and Adult Outcomes

Doctoral students are adults, and therefore it is important to examine how childhood poverty impacts adults. Duncan et al., (2010) conducted a quantitative study framed by a developmental perspective, which suggested that adult outcomes were significantly impacted by early childhood experiences. The study used 1968-2005 data from the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID), a longitudinal study that began in 1968, using a nationally representative sample of 18,000 individuals. It measured a variety of socioeconomic indicators including education, employment, and child development (PSID, 2013). A regression analysis was used to examine the adult achievement, behavior, and health outcomes (Duncan et al., 2010). Individuals who were observed between the prenatal period and 37 years of age were selected for this study. The researchers discovered that impoverished children had less education, lower income, and were more likely to be on welfare (Duncan et al., 2010). The significance of these findings is that socioeconomic mobility is difficult for adults who grew up in poverty (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). They are more likely to repeat what they grew up in unless they encounter protective factors that provoke the process of resilience within them.

Another look at the effect of childhood poverty on adult outcomes reveals similar results. Oshio et al. (2010) conducted a quantitative study using a sample of 7,002 individuals from the Japanese General Social Surveys (JGSS). The study used a recursive multiple-equation system to show that childhood poverty directly or indirectly negatively influences academic achievement, income, happiness, and self-rated health. Results of this study revealed that participants from impoverished families had less education and income, and reported being less happy and healthy. Individuals with a higher level of education are more likely to possess the social capital (Oseguera et al., 2011) needed acquire the resources necessary for well-being (Cavanaugh, 2008). Researchers indicate that childhood education contributes to better outcomes later in life (Horgan, 2009). It has been reported that some college graduates from impoverished backgrounds receive lower wages than college graduates who did not grow up in poverty, indicating that the cycle of poverty is difficult to overcome (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). Therefore, breaking the cycle of poverty is not instantaneous with education. However, being a first-generation student positions individuals to access the social and human capital they need to be successful.

PSA and Cumulative Stressors

Parental substance abuse exacerbates the experience of poverty for the family. The literature indicates that children and adults exposed to PSA are at high risk for negative outcomes (Balsa, 2009; Enoch, 2011; Klostermann & Kelley, 2009) due to the varying possibilities of cumulative stressors that occur in conjunction with PSA (Klostermann et al., 2011; Smith-McKeever & Gao, 2010; Templeton, Velleman, Hardy,

& Boon, 2009). Unfortunately, for many children, the presence of PSA in the home is often undetected until the discovery of other issues such as domestic violence or child abuse and neglect (CASA, 2013; Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008; Templeton et al., 2009; Testa & Smith, 2009). Children raised in impoverished environments are faced with multiple issues that make it difficult for researchers to determine specifically which issues determine certain outcomes (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2009). Additionally, impoverished individuals are more likely to abuse substances than working individuals (HHS, NSDUH, 2011). Therefore, when both poverty and PSA co-occur together, the dynamics of poverty interact with the dynamics of PSA (NIDA, 2010), further multiplying the risk. The impact of the cumulative stressors is far worse than if these problems presented in isolation (Phillips, Glesson, & Waites-Garrett, 2009).

Domestic Violence and Maltreatment

Domestic violence is a social problem that exposes children to risk. According to the National Institute of Justice (2011), child abuse and neglect co-occur with domestic violence. Also, PSA co-occurs with child abuse and neglect (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009; Welsh, Precey, & Lambert, 2008) and domestic violence (Klostermann & Kelley, 2009; Klostermann, Kelley, Mignone, Pusateri, & Fals-Stewart, 2010; Templeton et al., 2009), increasing the likelihood that a child will be exposed to one or both of these problems. Children's social and emotional development is negatively impacted due to exposure to trauma through violence (Schelble, Franks, & Miller, 2010). Furthermore, there are long- and short-term consequences for exposure to PSA and domestic violence, impacting children even into adulthood (Klostermann & Kelley, 2009). The impact of PSA on a

family often functions to maintain other complex problems that co-occur with PSA (Scaife, 2008). Therefore, families exposed to PSA and poverty are at risk of continual exposure of other co-occurring problems.

Children's emotional well-being is compromised when they are exposed to domestic violence. Templeton et al. (2009) conducted a qualitative study using a sample of 8 individuals between the ages 12 and 18 years of age who experienced both PSA and domestic violence. Results indicated common experiences among youth were unstable living conditions, behavioral problems, suicidal thoughts, sleep deprivation, being caught in the middle of violence, low academic achievement, emotional stress and adjustment issues, and older siblings being forced to care for younger siblings. Additionally, exposure to domestic violence impedes emotional regulation in children, and increases intense negative emotions and internalization (Howell, 2011).These risks increase when domestic violence co-occurs with PSA and economic deprivation (Templeton et al., 2009). Often domestic violence is undetected and unaddressed in substance abuse treatment programs (Klostermann et al., 2010), which means that children may not receive the help they need until someone is made aware the problem exists. Families exposed to poverty and PSA may have several other co-occurring problems that are not addressed, but can be just as devastating to children.

Parental substance abuse impairs a parent's ability to care for their children in the best possible way. Scaife (2008) describes some of the most obvious risk factors associated with PSA that lead to neglect, such as emotionally unavailable parents, lack of proper supervision, and poor social and daily life skills. Parental substance abuse robs

parents of the ability to successfully fulfill the parental role. Other research has indicated that impoverished families struggle with daily life skills (Vandsburger et al., 2008). However, PSA does more to weaken the ability of parents to do what is best for their children (Welsh et al., 2008), and in many cases the home environment hinders childhood development (Hall, 2010).

Neglect and academic achievement. How children recover from violence and neglect in the home is partially determined by their perceptions and their emotional regulation. For instance, children who blame themselves or who have weak and unstable parental attachments are more likely suffer negative outcomes (Howell, 2011). Schelble et al. (2010) conducted a qualitative study using a sample of 158 individuals aged 6 to 18 years old to determine the association between emotional regulation and academic resilience among neglected children. Linear regression was used to determine the relationship between emotional development, school, and demographics. The researchers found that emotional dysregulation was associated with poor academic achievement. Additionally, of the 158 participants, White students were more academically resilient than Black students. This suggests that the Black students' experience of maltreatment had a more negative impact on their educational attainment. Although the researchers examined neglect, it is unknown what other co-occurring issues were present in the families. The results of this study indicate that neglect is associated with poor emotional development, which is linked to low academic achievement (Schelble et al., 2009). Other research on child maltreatment confirms these findings (Coohey, Renner, Hua, Zhang, & Whitney, 2011).

Termination of rights. Child abuse and neglect can often lead to a termination of parental rights. Parental substance abuse is linked with negligent parenting, which contributes to maladaptive psychosocial development in children (Phillips et al., 2009; Schelble et al., 2010). Gilchrist and Taylor (2009) conducted a cross-sectional study using a sample of 185 participants to examine the common factors associated with children being removed from the home. This research is significant because the authors consider the risk factors the mother is exposed to, since these indirectly or directly impact the child. The researchers reported that less than half of the participants' children lived with them. Also, the greater the instability in the home setting, the more likely children would be removed. Mothers who had experienced severe depression, homelessness, prostitution, and incarceration did not have custody of their children (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009). As PSA further deteriorates the home life and increases the risk of danger to the child, the more likely parental rights will be terminated.

Incarceration is another issue that co-occurs with PSA and frequently leads to termination of parental rights (Phillips et al., 2009; Skinner, Haggerty, Fleming, & Catalano, 2009). Children with incarcerated parents experience compound risks such as poverty and constant changes in caregivers (Phillips et al., 2009). These risks are in addition to the risks associated with the circumstances that lead to incarceration and the risks associated with PSA (Phillips et al., 2009). Taken together, PSA and parental incarceration lead to negative outcomes such as diminished emotional and behavioral health, increased involvement in juvenile delinquency, and adolescent substance abuse (Phillips et al., 2009).

PSA and Adolescent Substance Abuse

Exposure to PSA increases the risk of the cycle of addiction in families. Children exposed to PSA are often unable to cope with the cumulative stress present in the home on a regular basis (Enoch, 2011; Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008). For instance, Rossow and Moan (2012) discovered that adolescents exposed to frequent PSA were more likely to have suicidal ideation or attempts. Additionally, children are socially, physically, and psychologically disadvantaged because of the impact of PSA on their environments and overall development (Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008). Another major risk factor associated with PSA is the potential for adolescent substance abuse (ASA) (CASA, 2013; Enoch, 2011; Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008). Furthermore, children who witness PSA in the home are even more likely to abuse substances than children who do not witness PSA (CASA, 2013). Adolescent substance abuse is a growing problem; each day, over 13,000 youth take their first drink, and those who drink before the age of 15 are at greater risk for alcoholism and trying illegal substances (CASA, 2013).

When adolescents use substances, they are at risk for lower educational attainment. Also, ASA could potentially increase the chances of perpetuating the cycles of addiction and poverty in a family. Broman (2009) conducted a study using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to research the association between ASA and adulthood socioeconomic status (SES). Results of the study indicated that drug use was associated with being on welfare in young adulthood, as well as with low academic achievement. Adolescent substance abuse is a significant risk factor for youth exposed to PSA because it increases their vulnerability for reproducing these issues

in their own lives. Adolescents who use drugs and are exposed to PSA are less likely to be academically resilient, due to the unstable and chaotic context of their lives.

Parenting and ASA

Parental substance abuse encourages ASA because of the compromised functioning and judgment of the parents. The literature indicates that genetic and environmental factors influence the development of ASA, and contribute to the understanding of resilience among individuals who experienced PSA (Enoch, 2011). Children of substance abusers are more likely to have poorer coping skills; their parents exhibit little monitoring, and erratic discipline and structure (Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008). However, environments with consistent parental monitoring function to protect adolescents from using substances (Bailey, Hill, Oesterle, & Hawkins, 2009; Kim & Neff, 2010). More specifically, Kim and Neff (2010) discovered that environments with consistent parental monitoring are predictive of adolescents who have negative views of drinking, who do not form close bonds with friends who drink, and who are more likely to be connected to positive-structured community activities that do not view underage drinking as socially acceptable. Adolescents exposed to PSA, therefore, are more likely to view using substances as socially acceptable, to have peers who use substances, to have weak family bonds, and to live in a community where underage drinking is normalized (CASA, 2011; Kim & Neff, 2010).

Bailey et al. (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of families across three generations to examine the transmission of externalizing behaviors across generations through parental discipline, monitoring, and substance abuse. Results indicated an

intergenerational continuity of parenting practices: the externalizing behavior of the middle generation predicted their substance abuse, which predicted the externalizing behavior of the third generation. Severe discipline and poor parental monitoring also contributed to the externalizing behaviors of the second generation (Bailey et al., 2009). In short, these research studies indicate that PSA increases risk for ASA through inhibited parental capacity and poor adolescent coping.

PSA Impact on Adult Children

To fully grasp the implications of PSA on MFOD, it is necessary to examine how PSA affects adult children. According to research conducted, parental substance abuse has negative consequences for children beyond adolescence (Balsa et al., 2009). The researchers used a sample 12,686 individuals from the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to examine the long-term mental and perceived health outcomes of adult children of alcoholics (ACOA). Results indicated that paternal substance abuse was associated with mental health problems in ACOA, while maternal substance abuse increased the chances for poorer physical and mental health outcomes in ACOA (Balsa et al., 2009). Therefore, academically resilient MFOD had to overcome the long-term consequences of PSA beyond childhood and adolescence.

Of significant concern for this present study is the impact of PSA on the adult learner. Drugs and alcohol are consumed by half of all college students (CASA, 2013). College students who are ACOA have poorer coping skills, and higher levels of psychological problems and academic failure (Hall, 2010). More specifically, ACOA are more likely than non-ACOA to have encountered dysfunctional family environments that

make it difficult to learn effective ways of handling stress (Balsa et al., 2009). Hall (2010) conducted a study using a sample of 50 ACOA and 50 non-ACOA to examine the differences in substance abuse, support systems, and family environment. Results indicated that adult children of alcoholics had higher levels of dysfunctional families of origin, more drinking problems of their own, weaker social support systems, and weaker academic autonomy than non-ACOA (Hall, 2010). Consequently, it is not only the pre-college experiences that contribute to academic resilience or drop out from higher education, but it is also how adult children cope with the experience of PSA. Graduating from high school and attending college does not mean an individual has recovered from the effects of PSA.

Adult children of substance abusers could potentially deal with their own addiction problems. Braitman et al. (2009) conducted a study using an anonymous sample of 572 college students to compare the frequency of substance abuse among ACOA and non-ACOA. Results indicated that ACOA were more likely to have used illegal drugs and drink if both parents were alcoholics or if just the mother was an alcoholic. Although ACOA did not drink more frequently, they did begin drinking earlier than non-ACOA (Braitman et al., 2009). Individuals who begin drinking during adolescence are four times more likely to become alcoholics than those who wait until they are 21 years old to begin drinking (CASA, 2013). Adolescent drinking is often a form of acting out for individuals exposed to various complex stressors in the family (CASA, 2013). Skinner, Haggerty, Fleming, and Catalano (2009) discovered that early internalizing and externalizing behaviors were significant factors in determining the

resilience of young adults who experienced PSA; individuals who exhibited more severe internalizing and externalizing were less resilient. How participants perceived and coped with what they experienced had more impact on their resilience than parental substance abuse treatment or the parent's ability to properly manage the home (Skinner et al., 2009). Thus, academic resilience involves the extent to which the perceptions and coping skills of MFOD exposed to poverty and PSA have empowered them to continue to move forward in spite of childhood, adolescent, and adult consequences of PSA.

PSA and Academic Achievement

Although poverty is associated with lower educational attainment, PSA further decreases the ability of children who grow up in that home environment to achieve academic success. PSA increases the vulnerabilities in the home environment and hinders the academic achievement of students across different levels of development (Coohey et al., 2011; Hall, 2010; Templeton et al., 2009). This is significant because higher levels of education decrease the chances of mental health problems and illicit drug use (Topitzes et al., 2009) and enable at-risk students to become leaders and social change agents (Hu, 2011), whereas lower levels of educational achievement are associated with the continuation of substance abuse across generations (Bailey et al., 2009; Broman, 2009).

Brook, Saar, and Brook (2010) conducted a cross-sectional study using a sample of 209 children and 209 mothers from African-American and Puerto Rican families to investigate the pathways to academic achievement. The researchers hypothesized that the personality traits of the child mediate between the PSA and their academic achievement. Results confirmed the hypothesis that PSA indirectly impacted academic outcomes

through the child's personality (Brook et al., 2010). Other researchers have also examined how PSA impacts children in school. Smith-McKeever and Gao (2010) researched the association between White and Black mothers' substance abuse and school suspension. Results indicated that external factors contributed to higher instances of school suspension. Impoverished minority students from homes with young single mothers with substance abuse and mental health problems were more likely to be suspended from school (McKeever & Gao, 2010). Therefore, research into the academic resilience of students should seek to explore the dynamics of internal and external protective factors.

Summary

The academic resilience necessary to reach the doctoral level is something that is developed over time. Drop out from online courses and doctoral programs is attributed to students' inability to overcome adverse external circumstances (Gardner, 2008; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Kember, 1995). When parents have little or no education, the drop out risk increases for higher education students (Mocetti, 2012). However, completion of online and doctoral programs is attributed to students' strong internal locus of control and self-motivation, as well as their tendency to view adverse external circumstances as reasons to continue education (Castro et al., 2011), and faculty support (Felder & Barker, 2013). The literature highlights the need to understand the academic resilience of this special population. For instance, poverty negatively impacts physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral health and is associated with poor academic outcomes (Wadsworth, et al., 2008; Yoshikawa, et al., 2012). Additionally, impoverished children

are more likely to have a negative perception of the educational environment and learning due to their adverse experiences with peers and teachers (Horgan, 2009). The external attribution for academic struggles begins at a young age.

Parental substance abuse positions children to experience multiple co-occurring stressors such as maltreatment (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009), domestic violence (Klostermann & Kelley, 2009), parental incarceration and termination of rights (Phillips et al., 2009), and adolescent substance abuse (CASA, 2013; Enoch, 2011). Adults who have experienced poverty and PSA are more likely to have experienced the following: (a) low educational attainment, (b) poverty, (c) mental and physical disadvantages, (d) poor coping skills, (e) less academic autonomy, and (f) external locus of control (Balsa et al., 2009; Hall, 2010; Oshio et al., 2010). However, how individuals perceive and cope with this experience significantly contributes to their resilience (Skinner et al., 2009).

In conclusion, a summary of the literature indicates that poverty and PSA constricts the development of individuals at multiple levels, potentially causing them to acquire a tendency to attribute their limitations to external circumstances. If adequate protective factors are missing, students are less likely to develop the internal locus of control needed to be academically resilient (Castro et al., 2011; Morales, 2010) However, it can be argued that protective factors themselves are subjective phenomenon. For instance, there are conflicting views in the literature about maintaining close ties with home: it is a protective factor for some and a risk factor for others (Bradbury & Mather, 2009). A consistent theme is that MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA are more likely to achieve academic resilience with support (Campa, 2010; Castro et al., 2011;

Felder & Barker, 2013; Liu et al., 2009; Morales, 2010). Therefore, researchers must acquire a deeper understanding of how this particular population of students overcomes the additional challenges introduced into the learning experience through online programs. This study fills this gap by using qualitative research to provide insight into how a specific group of MFOD developed academic resilience. Chapter Three progresses with a detailed explanation of how Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was used to conduct this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to reveal the meaning that participants with a history of poverty and PSA hold about their academic resilience and protective factors (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that involves the exploration of the perceptions (Felder & Barker, 2013) and meaning-making processes of participants (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the research design, including sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, trustworthiness of data, protection of human subjects, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

A phenomenon is a manifestation of an experience or situation that can be perceived and explored (Heidegger, 1962; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenon of academic resilience manifests as students are exposed to internal and external risks that inhibit academic growth and ambition. Being academically resilient is not about having a 4.0 grade point average, or being the most intelligent in the class. Rather, it is a determination to move forward and complete higher levels of education in spite of exposure to risk. In this study, I explored the experience of risk and protective factors using IPA. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA perceive and interpret their academic resilience?
2. How do MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA perceive and interpret their protective factors?

Descriptive and Interpretive Phenomenology

Phenomenology can be either descriptive or interpretive (McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009; Smith et al., 2009). Descriptive phenomenology is grounded in epistemology and is used to reveal what people know through how they describe phenomena (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; Reiners, 2012). However, interpretive phenomenology is grounded in ontology, and it is used to reveal how people experience a phenomena based its existence, and their interpretation of lived experiences (Heidegger, 1962; McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; Reiners, 2012; Sallmann, 2010; Smith et al., 2009).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Following the IPA ontological perspective, I designed this study to explore the nature and development of academic resilience. Interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences is a key element of IPA, and therefore this approach was deemed appropriate for this study (Smith et al., 2012). The data necessary to conduct an interpretation of lived experiences is best acquired through interviews and diaries (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, individual interviews were conducted to explore the lived experience of academic resilience.

Several researchers have used a descriptive phenomenological design to conduct studies on the educational experiences of at-risk students. Castro et al. (2011) conducted a descriptive phenomenological study in which participants had to describe the experiences that led up to them pursuing their doctorates. Other scholars have used descriptive phenomenology to describe what doctoral students believe contributes to their persistence (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012), and to describe how students from

high-minority, high-poverty schools made meaning of their journey to college (Reddick et al., 2011). Felder and Barker (2013) used descriptive phenomenology to describe the experiences of Black doctoral students. The aforementioned studies provided descriptions of how we know a phenomenon has manifested based on the similarities and differences of the common experiences of participants; whereas the ontological and hermeneutical aspects of IPA are about interpreting the lived experiences of people (Reiners, 2012). An understanding of what it is like to experience the phenomenon from the perception of the participants—individually and collectively—comes through interpretation. Based on the preceding literature review, it is clear that the academic resilience of minority at-risk students is an ongoing process of learning to be resilient through many complex life experiences. Therefore, IPA is a more effective approach to this study because it enabled me to discover what it is like to experience the internal process of academic resilience.

Other qualitative approaches. What follows is an explanation of why other qualitative approaches were deemed unsuitable for this particular research problem. Grounded theorists use a specific set of methodological steps in order to generate theory from qualitative data (Patton, 2002). Rather than establishing a specific sample, numerous participants are interviewed until saturation occurs and there are no new data discovered (Creswell, 2007). Glaser (2010) asserted that grounded theory helps shift the structure of interventions from a one-size-fits-all, to a practice that is grounded in the research of targeted populations. Part of the problem statement for this research was that there was a lack of targeted interventions for the population. Therefore, grounded theory did not prove to be a suitable approach for this study.

Narrative research would have been a more suitable approach if the focus of this study was how participants construct a story of who they are within the context of their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Larsson & Sjoblom, 2010). The narrative approach's focus is more on how one or two participants develop a narrative of their lives, rather than how a phenomenon is described or interpreted by a group of individuals (Creswell, 2007). A narrative approach was not appropriate because the research problem required the need to explore what has been revealed about academic resilience as a phenomenon, rather than about the participants as individuals (Patton, 2002).

Ethnographic researchers focus on exploring the development and maintenance of culture, such as shared beliefs, language, and behaviors among a specific group of people (Creswell, 2007). Groups that interact together in the same environment or context inevitably construct patterns that reveal expectations and shared beliefs (Patton, 2002). Ethnographic research might have been the appropriate approach if the goal of the study was to observe how this group of minority students is socialized into the online learning experience. However, in ethnographic research, the focus is on the group or culture, not the phenomenon.

Another qualitative approach that allows for the exploration of phenomenon is the case study (Yin, 2009). In a case study, the researcher collects data from a variety of sources and explores a specific individual, group, or organization based on a specific time period (Creswell, 2007). If a case study approach were used for this research, the unit of analysis might be a specific group of doctoral students who were enrolled during a certain time within an online program. The unit of analysis could be the structure of the online

doctoral program, supportive services for minority doctoral students, or doctoral students within a particular program of study. However, case studies are not the recommended approach for abstract phenomenon (Yin, 2009). For example, a case study approach could be used to investigate the factors that contributed to the completion of a group of doctoral students, rather than academic resilience as a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). As a result, a case study was not the best approach for the research problem addressed in this study.

Participants

The participants for this study are MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA growing up. All participants were actively enrolled in their online doctoral program at the time of the interviews. A review of the top doctorate granting universities based on demographics reveals that most minority groups are receiving doctorates from traditional universities (National Science Foundation, 2013). However, Walden University ranks second in the top 20 of doctorate granting universities to African Americans in the United States (National Science Foundation, 2013). Therefore, prospective MFOD are increasingly seeking doctoral degrees online. It was feasible to believe that participants could be located who fit the criteria of this study from the various online doctoral programs located in the United States.

Sampling Strategy

Qualitative research employs multiple purposive sampling strategies in order to delimit the characteristics of participants (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), through intentionally selecting participants based on the specific nature of their lived experiences

(Maxwell, 2005). In this research, I purposively selected participants using a snowball sampling and criterion strategy to locate individuals who knew people who fit the criteria of this study (Creswell, 2007). Walden students were informed of the study via the Walden Participant Pool, which is an electronic bulletin board used to publicize research and recruit participants from Walden University. The research pool listed the specific criteria that qualified students to participate. Potential participants outside of Walden University were contacted via word of mouth, e-mail, and social media.

Phenomenological research studies on the academic achievement of students recruited students who experienced the phenomenon by using specific selection criteria. Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw (2012) conducted a study using phenomenological methods to explore the factors students believed contributed to their academic achievement using individual interviews. Participants were chosen based on the criteria of having completed their program of study and of currently working in the field of education (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Cavazos et al., (2010) conducted individual interviews using predefined criteria that limited the sample to participants who were Chicano or Hispanic, had a specific grade point average, and had a specific enrollment status. Using a criterion sampling strategy eliminates people who have not experienced a phenomenon to the degree necessary to provide rich information (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). What follows is an explanation of the specific criteria that was used to purposively select participants.

Minority first-generation online doctoral student. A MFOD is considered any non-White doctoral student enrolled in an online program whose parents never attended

college (Gofen, 2009). If a participant's parents began college after them, they would be eligible for the study. Also, if a participant's siblings began college before them, they would still be considered first-generation.

Poverty. Each participant must have experienced poverty for the majority of their childhood. This implies that they did not grow up in an environment where poverty was temporary, such as momentary job loss, but poverty described their family's economic condition in general. Participants would have met at least one of the following six criteria long-term, or multiple criteria concurrently and long-term: (a) received free or reduced lunch, (b) family received food stamps, (c) lived in the projects, (d) lived in a low-income or high-poverty community, (e) extended periods of having insufficient basic needs, or (f) experienced homelessness or frequent transitions characterized by unstable living arrangements (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009; Legters & Balfanz, 2010; Wadsworth et al., 2008; Yoshikawa et al., 2012). An example of experiencing multiple poverty criteria concurrently is periods of not having enough food, but then moving with a relative. The participant might have had food because they were staying with someone else, however, since they could not afford housing, they were still impoverished.

Parental Substance Abuse. The DSM-IV-TR criteria was used to define PSA for this study. Parent is defined as the mother or father or other party responsible for the care of the participant when they were a child. The participants needed to recall their parents exhibiting one or more of the criteria within a 12-month period: (a) recurrent substance abuse that interfered with parental responsibility at home, school, or work; (b) recurrent substance use in physically hazardous situations; (c) recurrent substance use-related legal

problems; (d) recurrent substance use-related medical problems; (e) continued use despite a pattern of interpersonal or social conflict due to substance use (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). For the purposes of this study, substances are defined as any drug or toxin that produces a mood-altering affect, with the exception of tobacco products (DSM-IV-TR, 2000).

Other sampling strategies. Initially, I believed a homogenous sampling strategy would best fit this research problem. However, after searching through the primary and secondary research, a criterion sampling strategy was selected. In a phenomenological study on achievement in doctoral students, Castro et al. (2011) selected a homogenous sample of seven women from a doctoral counseling program for the purpose of conducting group interviews. A homogenous sample is effective for interviewing participants from similar experiences in focus groups (Patton, 2002). However, similar experiences does not guarantee participants will have had the significant life experiences necessary for an in-depth individual interview. Smith et al. (2009) recommend using a homogenous sample for IPA, however they also suggest specifying how much the sample varies and to what extent this can be considered a manifestation of the phenomenon. Therefore this implies that selecting a criterion sample allows a researcher to specify the differences or similarities that cannot be compromised.

Sample Size

The sample size for this research was determined by reviewing existing phenomenological studies and research texts in relation to the purpose of this particular study. Thus, the sample size proposed for this study was a minimum of six and a maximum of ten participants. The final sample size was six participants. The literature

indicates that the sample size for phenomenological studies varies depending on the scope of exploration of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). For instance, Reddick et al. (2011) conducted a phenomenological study using a sample of 21 students to describe the breadth of experiences students encountered while attending high-minority high-poverty schools. Also, Spaulding and Rocksinson-Szapkiw (2012) conducted a phenomenological study using a sample of 76, and conducted interviews until saturation was achieved, in order to capture the range of factors that promoted academic persistence in a doctoral program. These samples are outside of the normal range for most phenomenological studies.

There is a difference between the average sample sizes of descriptive phenomenological and IPA studies. Descriptive phenomenological studies tend to have an average of 5-25 participants (Creswell, 2007); interpretive studies tend to have between 3-10 participants, and might require more than one interview (Smith et al., 2009). Larger samples are effective in qualitative studies when seeking to capture the breadth of a phenomenon, however smaller samples are more effective when an in-depth analysis is desired (Smith, et al., 2009; Patton, 2002). Consequently, a smaller sample was chosen for this study due to the need for depth, rather than breadth, of interpretation of significant past experiences.

Several IPA researchers have explored meaningful lived experiences using smaller sample sizes. Shepherd et al. (2010) used a sample of six to explore the resilience of women from adolescence. The size of the sample allowed the researchers to conduct a deeper exploration of the phenomenon, requiring the participants to interpret the

meanings they attached to significant adverse experiences that happened over the course of their lives (Shepherd et al., 2010). Likewise, Sallmann (2010) conducted an IPA study using a sample of 14 women who interpreted the connections between prostitution and substance abuse in their lives. Mazaheri, Sunvisson, Nkbakht, Maddah, and Emami (2011) used 10 participants in an IPA to explore the experience of taking care of a family member with dementia among Iranian immigrant caregivers. Shepherd et al. (2010) explored the phenomenon of resilience in depth using a smaller sample, and required participants to provide a detailed narrative of their life history. In short, the literature and research texts agree that there is no specific formula to determine an acceptable number of participants for qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007; Mazaheri et al., 2010; Patton, 2002; Shepherd et al., 2010). Therefore, the sample selected for this research is based on the need to conduct an in-depth exploration of academic resilience (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

A brief telephone interview was set up with potential participants. During the initial conversation, I introduced myself, provided a brief description of the study, and asked how participants preferred me to deliver their consent forms. Once I received the signed consent forms, I e-mailed the demographic surveys. After eligibility was determined, telephone interviews were scheduled with each participant. Participants who lived within a 3-hour distance from Grand Rapids Michigan were offered a face-to-face interview in a private locked room at the local library. Each of the interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder, transcribed verbatim using a professional transcription service, and entered into Dedoose, a mixed methods data analysis software.

Data Management

Consent forms were stored in a password-protected e-mail on a password-protected computer. Each participant's folder contains the following five contents: (a) demographic survey, (b) audio file of the recorded interview, (c) transcript of the interview, (d) chart containing emergent themes of each individual interview, and (e) summary of the interpretation of the interview, including major emergent themes. There was also a cross-case analysis chart developed after each individual case was analyzed.

Interviews

The qualitative interviews were conducted using an interview guide that enabled participants to tell the story of their family experiences and academic journeys. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or informal (Patton, 2002). Spaulding and Rocksinson-Szapkiw (2012) used a standardized interview guide with open-ended questions in a study on the exploration of doctoral persistence. Another exploratory study on the lived experiences of doctoral students utilized a semi-structured interview guide (Castro et al., 2011). The latter study allowed for more probing. For instance, participants were asked to tell the researcher about their doctoral student experiences and to describe any barriers they experienced (Castro et al., 2011). However, the former study asked participants what was the hardest part about getting their degree (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). This indicates that the standardized guide allowed for a narrower scope of answers.

Studies with standardized interviews do not allow for a lot of probing, because each participant is asked the exact same questions in a predetermined order (Patton,

2002). However, semi-structured interviews for IPA should be broad and prompt participants to provide a narrative of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). For instance, a phenomenological study on women's resilience in adolescence asked participants to guide the researcher though a negative experience in detail (Shepherd et al., 2010). This study includes a semi-structured interview guide which included the following questions and potential prompts:

1. What was it like growing up?
    a. What kind of kid were you?
    b. What difficulties, if any, did you have growing up that you believe most other kids did not have?
    c. What benefits, if any, did you have growing up that you believe most other kids did not have?
2. What did school mean to you?
3. How did you feel about being a student?
4. What difficulties did you encounter in school or related-school activities?
    a. What was easy about school or related-school activities?
5. How did your family background support or impede your academic success?
6. How did your upbringing and environment impact your identity then?
7. How does your upbringing and environment impact your identity now?
8. Explain how you made the decision to start a doctoral program?
9. What does school mean to you now?
10. How do you feel about being a student now?

11. What difficulties do you encounter in your doctoral program?
    a. What is easy about your doctoral program?
12. Considering what we have discussed, how does your background influence the continued persistence of school?

A phenomenon is revealed through signs or symptoms (Heidegger, 1962). Also, qualitative researchers can explore a phenomenon by asking questions about the time, events, and people associated with the phenomenon (Castro et al., 2011; Shepherd et al., 2010; Spaudling & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012). Therefore, content validity was established by structuring the open-ended questions to prompt the participants to reflect deeply about what it was like to grow up poor, experience PSA, and continue to try to do well in school. Also, the questions were structured to prompt participants to reflect deeply on the internal and external things that influenced them throughout their academic journeys. Limiting the questions to the current online doctoral experience would have left me exploring their academic resilience out of context. Their current online doctoral journey is the peak of their total experience of academic resilience. Therefore, the questions were structured in a way that the present experience was situated in the context of the complete process of academic resilience.

The interpretative analysis of these interview questions provided the data needed to answer the research questions. Some questions were structured to facilitate an in-depth reflection on the each participant's cumulative academic experiences within the context of being growing up in poverty and having a substance abusing parent. Also, the

interview questions were structured to facilitate discussion on protective factors as well as the lived experience of the current doctoral journey.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis begins informally during data collection when the researcher starts to engage with the data (Patton, 2002). Interpretive phenomenological analysis, like many other qualitative methods, does not have a specific set of data analysis steps (Creswell, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). This study followed the data analysis procedures for IPA presented by Smith et al., (2009). The interpretation of the data ultimately revealed how participants developed and experienced academic resilience in the context of poverty and PSA.

Word-for-word transcripts were typed up in Microsoft Word and uploaded into software (Dedoose) that allowed for qualitative data analysis. Most qualitative methods have similar analytic steps such as notation in the margins of transcripts, looking for similarities and differences within and between participant narratives, and using codes and themes (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). What follows is an explanation of steps that were used to analyze the word-for-word transcripts that were produced from the audiotaped interviews with each participant.

Reading and Listening

Prior to analyzing the transcripts, I documented my own experiences and thoughts with the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). I kept this information in a research journal that would be used before, during, and after data was collected. Transcripts were analyzed once individual interviews were completed, rather than after

all interviews are completed. According to Smith et al., (2009), the transcript should be read while listening to the audio tape. Also, transcripts need to be read multiple times in order to become familiar with the text. With each transcribed interview, I noted distinctions between broad and specific events and descriptions and interpretations of events (Smith et al., 2009). Utilizing these memos allowed for separating my initial thoughts about the transcript and interview from the actual interview itself (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith et al., 2009).

Exploratory Analysis

The next phase of analysis involved detailed notation about how participants communicated their thoughts, feelings, and experiences during the interviews (Smith et al., 2009). Statements that are relevant for understanding the experience should be noted as such (Moustakas, 1994). In IPA there are three distinctive types of comments that should be noted throughout the interview. Descriptive comments reveal what is important for the participant and what it means (Smith et al., 2009). Identifying descriptive comments involved highlighting specific words used by the participants that described experiences associated with the phenomenon. Next, linguistic comments were highlighted throughout each transcript. Linguistic comments are revealed through specific types of phrases, metaphors, repeated words, pauses, use of pronouns, or tone of voice (Smith et al., 2009). A deeper analysis of the transcript involves conceptual comments (Smith et al., 2009). At this stage, analysis became more interpretive as I questioned the meaning behind specific portions of the transcript and developed conceptual comments.

Here is where the distinction between the role of the researcher in descriptive and interpretive phenomenology surfaces. In descriptive phenomenology, the researcher attempts to bracket, or separate their foreknowledge or experiences in an effort to separate them from analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Moreover, the researcher sets aside any foreknowledge or predispositions and experiences and understands the phenomenon as it presents itself (Moustakas, 1994). However, an IPA researcher acknowledges the limitation of their foreknowledge, understanding that interpretation causes the revelation of unknown foreknowledge. In IPA, the interpretation emerges from a cyclical exchange between the researcher's experiential knowledge and the influence of the participant's lived experiences on that foreknowledge. Thus, the ontological perspective of IPA embraces the experience of the researcher being in the world of the participant (Smith et al., 2009). After listening to and reading the individual transcripts multiple times, each transcript was noted with descriptive, linguistic, and interpretive comments.

Emergent Themes

The next phase of analysis involved developing codes, which represented emerging themes that were combination of the participant's descriptions and the researcher's interpretations (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith at el., 2009). More specifically, the researcher looked for relationships and patterns amongst the descriptive, linguistic, and interpretive comments associated with the transcript (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith et al., 2009). Each transcript was dissected and restructured by placing common sections under specific codes. A list of codes was kept in a Word document that

included the meaning and location of each line of text associated with the code (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Clusters of Themes

After initial codes were developed, the data were further reduced by developing groups of common themes using the techniques suggested by Smith et al. (2009), which include abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, numeration, and function. The techniques chosen depended on how the patterns and relationships between the emergent themes evolved during data analysis. For example, one established theme may be a suitable super-ordinate theme for a group of emergent themes. In this case, subsumption is the analytical technique. However, abstraction is more effective in cases where no suitable super-ordinate theme exists (Smith et al., 2009). Each group of themes was assigned a label that further explained the relationship between them (Smith et al., 2009). A chart was constructed for each participant and across all participants as a visual explanation of how the themes were connected and associated with the transcripts.

Quality Assurance

Credibility was established by ensuring that rigorous methods were used for data collection and interpretation (Patton, 2002), including an honest and thorough disclosure of this researcher's experience and bias toward the phenomenon. Additionally, this included considering alternative explanations and accepting cases that might not fit the pattern of academic resilience that continued to evolve during analysis (Patton, 2002). Member checking was also used to determine if the participants agreed that the researcher's descriptions and interpretations reflected their lived experiences (Creswell,

2007). Castro et al., (2011) reviewed their interpretations with participants in order to substantiate the researcher interpretations. In this study, participants were provided with a summary of the researchers interpretations for member checking.

Transferability ensures that the lived experiences are understood by and relatable to others who read the study (Castro et al., 2011). Thick description was used to communicate the experiences in such a manner that readers will understand what it was like to have experienced the participant's life (Patton, 2002). Data was reported using detailed direct quotations to present the events, relationships, experiences and thought processes associated with the participant being academically resilient.

Confirmability was established through disclosure of the researcher's role. I have personal experience with PSA. Additionally, I work with youth who have experienced both poverty and PSA and many of them struggle in school. The more the data emerged, the more I became aware of my preconceptions (Smith et al., 2009). To stay true to the method, I acknowledged this realization, and made room for the participant's lived experience to surface in order for the data to come forth.

Dependability was established through maintaining a detailed audit trail. An audit trail in an IPA study consists of all field notes, the interview guide, recordings of the interview, electronic and hard-copy transcripts, and the entire research proposal (Smith et al., 2009). The audit should provide a clear guide to every step in the research process. It serves as a means of verifying that the research was conducted appropriately and with integrity. And finally, during every stage of the research process, the role of the researcher was noted and disclosed to established confirmability (Smith et al., 2009).

Role of the Researcher

A significant difference between descriptive and interpretive phenomenology is the role of the researcher. In descriptive phenomenology, the researcher removes his or her preconceptions through a practice known as bracketing (Connelly, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). In phenomenology, bracketing serves to increase objectivity by disassociating what the researcher already knows about a phenomenon in order to better understand the phenomenon from the participant's point of view. IPA researchers handle their preconceptions differently. A premise of the IPA approach is that a researcher cannot fully remove his or her preconceptions from interpretation (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). Often a researcher is not fully aware of his or her preconceptions until he or she has encountered the lived experiences of the participants (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, the researcher frequently revisits the data collected from the interviews, in light of his or her own ever-evolving preconceptions and perceptions, until he or she arrives at the interpretation of the participant's lived experience (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2009). As the researcher isolates his or her foreknowledge and becomes more informed by the participant, a detailed account of the lived experiences evolves from descriptive to interpretive (Smith et al., 2009). In addition, researchers conducting IPA studies must disclose bias and acknowledge that the participant is the expert on the lived experience (McConnell-Henry et al., 2011).

My interest in this topic developed as a result of my childhood and my present career as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). I work with clients who struggle with adult and adolescent substance abuse, as well as low educational attainment and poverty.

Unfortunately, many of the adolescents I have encountered are disengaged from school and do not have a strong support system. In addition, many parents are unaware of what it takes to foster academic resilience in their children, when they themselves have a substance abuse problem. I wanted to know what it was like for MFOD exposed to poverty and PSA to become academically ambitious and determined beyond high school graduation.

I am a Black female online doctoral student born and raised in Detroit Michigan; I grew up in the 1970s, when heroin and crack-cocaine devastated my community. My mother's life was consumed by heroin addiction and AIDS. In addition, she lived in poverty and never graduated from high school. Due to her inability to take care of me, I was raised by my maternal grandmother, rather than going into the foster care system. Although I always did well in school, beginning at the age of 15, I succumbed to substance abuse, which almost cost me my undergraduate degree. Education's role in my hope for a better life was a huge protective factor once I began to realize its significance. These personal and professional experiences have been acknowledged, and my role as the researcher was to be open to learn more about my preconceptions as I analyzed the data, and to accept that the participants are the experts on their subjective experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant was informed about the purpose of the research and the expectations for research participants. Informed consent was collected after participants decided whether or not they would participate in the study. Each participant was offered a $10 gift card when the interviews were completed to show appreciation for their time.

The researcher discussed with each participant the likelihood that they would be disclosing sensitive experiences. Additionally, the researcher discussed with each participant their present support system and ability to cope with stressful situations. Participants were informed that the study was voluntary and they could refuse to answer, decide to answer a question later, or refuse to participate if the discussion became too difficult. If this were to occur, the plan was to empathize with the participant and recommend they access their support system as needed.

All hard-copy data was stored in the researcher's personal computer, which is password protected. Hard-copy data was locked in the researcher's office. Additionally, all participants were issued pseudonyms and any parts of their interviews they wished to remain confidential will remain confidential. Data will be destroyed according to university guidelines. The IRB approval for this research is valid through November 21, 2014 with IRB approval number 11-22-13-0178062.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth overview of IPA and the rationale for using this method to address the research problem stated in this proposal. A semi-structured interview guide was developed to prompt participants to discuss the past and present experiences that made them eligible for this study. The plan of data analysis was to uncover the internal and external protective factors, perceptions of risk, and any other similar or different experiences related to the manifestation of the phenomenon of academic resilience. In Chapter Four, I present the findings from the field research.

Chapter 4: Results

The data detailed within this chapter will provide an exploration of the process of the academic resilience of the six participants interviewed. A qualitative, interpretative, phenomenological analysis was conducted using in-depth interviews. The research questions which guided this study are as follows:

1. How do MFOD who experienced poverty and parental substance abuse perceive and interpret their academic resilience?
2. How do MFOD who experienced poverty and parental substance abuse perceive and interpret their protective factors?

The first research question was designed to explore how the participants came to be academically resilient. The second research question was designed to discover and explore the experiences and perceptions related to the protective factors in the participants' lives.

In this chapter, I will first provide an explanation of the demographics of each of the participants. Then I will highlight the details related to the qualitative interviews conducted for data collection. Afterwards, I will provide an in-depth explanation of how the data were interpreted and the emergent themes produced from the data. The next section will include how credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were used to maintain the integrity of this qualitative study. Finally, the results and summary sections will provide the answers to the research questions, including detailed information from the transcripts.

Setting

Telephone interviews were conducted with Craig, Tracy, Marcus, and Jessica. To provide confidentiality and protection of subjects, I secluded myself in a private room and placed the participants on speaker. To further protect subjects, I conducted the interviews on a vacant floor so that the interviews would not be overheard in the hallway. Two local participants, Denise and Mary, were interviewed in person in a private locked office at a local library. None of the six participants reported any personal situations that negatively impacted their ability to successfully complete the interviews. Examples of situations that might have inhibited a participant's ability to complete a qualitative interview include emotional distress or physical sickness.

Demographics

Six Black participants were interviewed for this study. Pseudonyms for the participants are Jessica, Mary, Craig, Tracy, Marcus, and Denise. After consent forms were completed, each participant was asked to complete a demographic survey in order to confirm inclusion criteria. Participants needed to meet at least one of six identifying characteristics related to poverty. The six criteria and the associated abbreviations include:

- POVstam: Received food stamps.
- POVlunch: Received free or reduced lunch.
- POVproje: Lived in the projects.
- POVcom: Lived in a low-income or high-poverty community.
- POVneed: Recalls extended periods of having insufficient basic needs.

- POVhome: Experienced homelessness or recalls frequent transitions characterized by insufficient living arrangements or living with other people due to the inability of being able to afford housing.

Participants needed to have one parent or guardian who met at least one of five identifying criteria for PSA in a 12-month period. The five criteria and the associated abbreviations include:

- PSAresp: Recurrent substance use that interfered with parental responsibilities at home, school, or work.
- PSAhazard: Recurrent substance use in physically hazardous situations.
- PSAlegal: Recurrent substance use-related legal problems.
- PSAmed: Recurrent substance use-related medical problems.
- PSApatt: Continued use despite a pattern of social or interpersonal problems due to substance use.

For a complete summary see Table 1.

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria

Demographics	Jessica	Craig	Mary	Tracy	Marcus	Denise
Gender	F	M	F	F	M	F
POVstam	X		X		X	X
POVlunch	X	X	X	X	X	X
POVproje	X		X			X
POVcom	X		X	X		X
POVneed	X		X	X		
POVhome	X		X			
PSAresp	X		X		X	X
PSAhazard						
PSAlegal	X					X
PSAmed	X		X	X		X
PSApatt	X	X	X		X	X

Poverty

Dedoose was the qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis software used to assist in analyzing data and demographic information. This study was open to all racial and ethnic minorities; however, only Black doctoral candidates volunteered, and therefore this study was delimited to Black students. According to the demographics, all of the participants received free or reduced lunch. This was the only poverty indicator that all six participants had in common. Half the participants grew up in the projects, and

four reported growing up in a low-income community. Those who grew up in a low-income community included the three participants who grew up in the projects. The participants who moved out of the projects continued to live in low-income communities. Half the participants reported experiencing periods when they lacked basic needs. Only two participants reported time periods of frequent transitions. Frequent transitions included periods of brief homelessness when participants had to live with other people. Those who experienced frequent transitions also lived in the projects. There were four female and two male participants eligible to participate in the study. Neither of the two men reported living in a low income community. Additionally, the men experienced fewer of the other poverty indicators than those who reported living in a low-income community.

Parental Substance Abuse

Demographic information related to PSA was derived from the DSM-IV-TR (2000). Participants indicated that none of their parents used in hazardous situations. Four participants reported recurrent substance abuse that interfered with parental responsibilities. This category included the three participants who lived in the projects and one of the men. Four of the participants reported that their parent had recurrent substance abuse-related medical problems. This category included the three participants who lived in the projects and the other female participant. Only two participants reported problems with recurrent substance use-related legal problems and these were both participants who lived in the projects. Five participants reported continued use in spite of a pattern of interpersonal problems related to substance use. It would seem that all

participants would have chosen yes for this category because their parents had ongoing addictions. However, Tracy did not learn about her father's substance abuse until she was an adult. Based on this, it is understood why she did not perceive a problem in interpersonal relationships related to substance use growing up.

Summary of Demographic Analysis

A limitation of the demographic survey is that it did not gather information on which parent used or their drug of choice. In every case, the father used drugs and in the two cases where the mother used drugs, both parents used drugs. The one case where crack cocaine was the parent's drug of choice met all the criteria for poverty and all but one of the criteria for PSA. Also, the one case where the participant was unaware of PSA, only one indicator for PSA was present. Overall, the participants who lived in the projects met the most criteria for PSA and poverty. In situations where participants lived in impoverished communities and were aware of PSA, the impact of PSA was greater on the family. For a complete summary of data related to parent usage demographics see Table 2.

Table 2

Parent Use Demographics

Participants	Parent	Drug of Choice
Jessica	Both	Crack Cocaine
Craig	Father	Alcohol, Cocaine
Mary	Father, Stepfather	Crack, Alcohol
Tracy	Father	Marijuana
Marcus	Father	Alcohol
Denise	Both	Alcohol

Data Collection

The participants received and completed the demographic survey via e-mail after consent forms were completed. Once I received the survey and verified inclusion, I contacted each of the six participants to schedule the interviews. All interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol. Telephone interviews were conducted in a private room in my home. The participants were put on speaker and the interviews were recorded. Prior to beginning each interview, I asked the participant to speak and allow me to record to ensure I could clearly capture their voices. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in a private room at the local library, and the interviews were also audio-recorded. I asked clarifying questions and probed for more information as needed to obtain an answer to each question. The researcher must listen intently to gauge when a participant is done responding and if it would be appropriate to keep the original

sequence of the interview protocol (Smith et al., 2012), so some of the questions were asked out of sequence, depending on the initial narrative provided by the participant. Additionally, since participants often begin with descriptive explanations and progress to a deeper disclosure of their feelings as the interview progresses and they become more comfortable (Smith et al., 2012), a researcher must pay attention to shifts in the rhythm of the interview; if a researcher notices a shift, he or she should revisit any parts of the interview where a deeper reflection is needed (Smith et al., 2012). There were some participants who reflected deeply early on in their interviews, and I did not have to return to earlier topics. However, I did more probing with Marcus, Craig, and Denise to prompt deeper reflection.

I did not take notes during the interviews, unless it was a reminder to revisit a topic later if the participant did not clearly answer the question. Otherwise, I gave each participant my undivided attention and wrote down general notes after each interview was completed. Once transcripts were completely analyzed, each participant was provided a summary of the researcher's interpretation of their lived experiences. Emergent themes from the transcriptions were also included in the summaries. Each of the participants reported that the summaries provided an accurate interpretation of their interviews. The interviews ranged in duration from 16 minutes to 40 minutes long. Furthermore, the semi-structured interview protocol was used in its entirety with each participant, allowing for open-ended questions as needed. An Olympus digital voice recorder and a Sony microcassette recorder were used to record the interviews. Two

devices were used to protect against interrupted interviews due to technical difficulties. Neither of the devices defaulted during recording.

Final Procedures

The data collection procedures followed remained consistent with the procedures provided in Chapter 3, with the exception of the recruitment of participants and interview transcription. I completed a request for change in procedures and was granted permission to work with a company to have the interviews professionally transcribed. I transcribed two interviews and the other four were professionally transcribed.

Initially, only students from Walden University were solicited to participate in the study using the Walden Research Pool. The rationale behind this was that Walden ranked second in the top 20 among universities with African-American doctoral students (National Science Foundation, 2013). After several months of waiting for participants, I completed a form requesting a change in research procedures. It was feasible to include minorities from other online programs because choosing students from different universities would not negatively impact the study. Included with the request was the recruitment letter, which included the title and summary of the study and an overview of eligibility criteria along with my contact information and the IRB approval number and expiration date. Upon receipt of IRB approval, I distributed the recruitment letter using the following three procedures:

- I sent e-mails to people I knew who would be interested in this study, and requested they forward it to people they knew.
- I posted on the Facebook and LinkedIn pages of professional groups I belong to.

- I sent e-mails to colleagues at work.

Once the recruitment letter was distributed, I began to be contacted by people who were either interested in participating or knew someone who would be. Opening the study to doctoral students from other institutions lead to five of the six participants. Furthermore, the data analysis section will highlight that, although participants attended different universities, common emergent themes related to their current doctoral experience emerged. The next section will highlight how the qualitative data was organized and managed.

Data Analysis

While there is not a single prescribed method for executing an interpretative phenomenological analysis, the common purpose of all IPA research is to transition from descriptive to interpretative and from the particular to the shared (Smith et al., 2012). Data analysis began with listening to the audio recording while reading the printed transcript, without taking any notes. This process enabled me to verify the accuracy of each transcript, correct mistakes in transcribing, and to recall the tone, inflection, and personality of each participant. After this initial read, I re-read the transcripts without listening to the audio tapes and I began making general notes to capture my thoughts about specific portions of the interviews. This sequence of reading while listening and reading without listening helped me keep the participant as the center of the analysis (Smith et al., 2012). After re-reading the hard copy of the transcript without listening to the audio, the audio tapes were not listened to again unless it was to verify that what was typed in a portion of transcript was accurate. The transcripts had time stamps throughout

them, which made it possible to quickly access a portion of text without needing to listen to the audio tapes in their entirety, after the first listening.

Exploratory Analysis

The first step to moving towards coding and emergent themes was conducting an exploratory analysis. I began by re-reading the transcript in MS Word and using the comments feature to highlight the response to each question. Comments were put in the right hand margin. The comments feature automatically assigns a number to each portion of text highlighted and this was used to reference excerpts in Word. Excerpts were assigned descriptive, linguistic, and/or conceptual comments. Comments were labeled 'D', 'L', and 'C' to easily distinguish the type of comment. Descriptive comments are the participant's surface comments about a person, place, or event. Linguistic comments refer to an analysis of how language is used. This might include metaphors, slang, phrases, or changes in voice or tone. Conceptual comments capture the participant's thoughts and feelings about their experience and often involve questioning what was spoken for a deeper analysis. For example, when asked what school meant to her, Mary replied, "everything…the biggest thing it meant I wouldn't be like my mother…I loved her….I didn't want to be poor." The following comments were written about this excerpt:

1. D: She didn't want to be like her mother.
2. L: Everything.
3. C: Her mother didn't have many options, being educated meant having more options later in life.

After the initial analysis, I re-read through the transcript and notes for a deeper analysis. This provided the opportunity to see if the comments made sense and to add comments, as needed, to the existing comments.

Emergent Themes

Next, I printed the transcripts with the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments. I re-read through the hard-copy transcripts and developed emergent themes, which were words and phrases that captured the meaning and significance of the initial notes. Four transcripts were glued to poster boards, with the word and phrases to the right of the initial noting. For the other two transcripts, I narrowed the margins and hand wrote the words and phrases in the left-hand margin, across from the initial notes. The latter method was more convenient because the boards were bulky. In either case, I wrote the line number of the excerpt beside each emergent theme to keep emergent themes and initial noting linked with excerpts in MS Word. What follows are circumstances that were unique to each participant, as well as selected excerpts from each participant and the associated emergent themes related to academic resilience and protective factors. These emergent themes were selected based on their frequency within the individual case.

Jessica. Jessica's case was unique from the other participants, due to her parents' drug of choice. Crack cocaine can cause a family to experience devastating psychological pain and financial losses (de Paula, Bessa Jorge, Alves Alburquerque, & de Queiroz, 2014). Here Jessica shares her experience of PSA:

> Um, it was rough you know just knowing that your parents are on drugs and it just I, it's kind of hard to explain, it just it was it was it was a hard time you knowing

> that your parents were stuck like lights being turned off gas being turned off selling Christmas gifts selling items in the house or having a closet full of dirty clothes um, our house maintained was clean and all but there was times, like certain things my mom didn't do cause her addiction got the best of her…you know, just…just know certain rough times not being able to really focus my energy on being a child sometimes.

Although Jessica's family lived in the projects, unlike other participants, her story reveals that her experience of poverty was intensified because of PSA. When other participants discussed the experience of utilities being disconnected or not having enough food, it was within the context of discussing their experience of poverty. However, Jessica's story sheds light on the fact that different types of drugs can make the experience of poverty even more difficult.

Emergent themes that surfaced from Jessica's interview related to her academic resilience included focusing on what she could control, school as a protective factor, school as a place where she could be in control, making something of herself, and a future orientation. For example, when asked what school meant to her, Jessica replied,

> Well to me, it was pretty much the only thing that I could control. I was able to control what happened in school. I could control my grades, I could control how I acted. I could control all that, I couldn't control what happened at home. And also school was my out. I knew that once I graduated from high school, I didn't even think about college but it was just graduating from high school that I was ugh you know I was gonna make something of myself.

Internal locus of control and future orientation emerged from this passage because Jessica attributed her success to being in control and, in spite of what happened to her family, she believed she would be successful. Although both of her parents were addicted to crack cocaine, Jessica's perspective enabled her to keep this in what she called the background:

> …but despite things that were happening in the background that never affected my performance in school. Still getting good grades, you know still did very well in high school … I think that was just my coping mechanism to despite what was going on at home, I put more of my energy into school.

Throughout Jessica's transcript it became clear that school played a multidimensional role and that it acted as a protective factor, buffeting her from the impact of poverty and PSA. Jessica's academic experience was positive and rewarding, therefore school became a place where she could control the outcome and be successful. School as a coping mechanism enabled her to step away from the chaos at home, leaving it in the background, and her academic achievement reinforced her academic resilience.

Craig. Emergent themes related to poverty and PSA from Craig's case were divergent from the other five cases. A unique feature of Craig's experience is that his father not only used drugs, but he also sold drugs; his father was murdered when Craig was ten years old. Craig reported that his father worked, although his parents did not always live together. He stated the following about his father's substance use,

> You know to, you know, to be honest … you would never know that drugs were a problem. Um, I, you know, and I'm a licensed professional counselor now, um, and so when I look back, I can't really see that drugs was ever made to be a

> problem….He still made, you know, he still worked. Um, yeah, he was not like a drug addict to the … point where he was not able to function, function very well.

Craig did not grow up in the projects or what he considered to be a high-poverty community. Although his family's income was low enough for him to qualify for free or reduced lunch, and his single mother of four children worked two jobs, Craig reported that his family was not impoverished. After the death of Craig's father, his mother received a monthly Social Security payment. This served as a financial protective factor in addition to his mother's ability to work. Craig reported:

> And at one point she had worked two jobs to, um, to make she sure we were cared for and in the, in the process of her working two jobs, then that caused me to have to be more responsible with my younger sibling and cousin. My brother's ten years younger than I am, and so between him and my cousin I had to pretty much pick up the slack while she was at work….And really never felt poverty or being poor.

Although school was a protective factor for Craig, it was not a protective factor for him to the extent that it was for the other participants in the earlier years. But when asked how he felt about being a student, Craig reported:

> Um, once again, it was, it's what you did, I guess. When I started getting good grades I guess then I started to, um, it, it was good thing, it, it, it was more of a positive experience.

Craig had other protective factors which impeded the risk associated with poverty and PSA and supported his academic resilience. Therefore, emergent themes associated with

his academic resilience include: father was a functional addict, never felt poverty, and reinforcement of good grades.

Mary. Mary grew up in the projects and witnessed her mother experience a series of dysfunctional relationships with men. Mary enjoyed school and sports because they were an outlet. A unique part of Mary's experience is that her basketball coach became a mentor to her, and his influence led to her attending a predominantly Black institution (PBI). Mary later revealed that she needed to be in that type of environment to succeed as an undergraduate, because she needed to find her identity. Emergent themes that developed are: basketball coach and mentor, couldn't see herself achieving goals at home, and paving her own way:

> You know, the only other thing I would say is outside of my elementary years, one of the things my mother was lacking is, she didn't have a college education. Because she didn't have a college education, she didn't know how to direct me to go to college. I was actually into sports. I played basketball, I played track. Our basketball coach had graduated from a college. The college that he had graduated from and his wife graduated from, they actually encouraged us to go to the same place. They helped get our paperwork together. Financial aid, I was on financial aid. They helped us get all that paperwork together, and that's how I ended up going to college. At that time, I was ready to go. I can remember when I graduated, I had a conversation with my mother. I told my mother when I graduate, I'm never moving back, I wasn't moving back home.

Another unique experience is that Mary experienced homelessness during her undergraduate program. She was academically resilient because she believed education was the only way out of poverty and the lifestyle of the projects. She reported that her experience of poverty gave her the drive she needed to do what was necessary to overcome poverty. Emergent themes include: homelessness in college and escape from poverty.

> … it came to a point where I couldn't pay for my dormitory and because I couldn't, I didn't have enough money from financial aid. You could only get a certain amount of financial aid per year, and I ran out and was short, so I had to pay out of pocket… I didn't have enough to cover room and board. I never told my mother. To this day she don't know. So I had to live off campus, and I can remember ... I can remember living out of my car for maybe 2, almost 3 months and got 2 jobs. I had a job at McDonald's and a job at the Laundromat. I was very resourceful… I have a place to wash my clothes. I didn't have to worry about taking a bath, cause I could go to campus…So I would go and shower there, go to work, eat food, then I would work…that was tough. My mother doesn't know still to this day. I'd never tell her that…. So that was a drive, so you had the negative side being, I never wanted to go back there, and the only way I thought out was, my education. Without education, couldn't make the money I needed.

Marcus. Marcus's case was unique in that he had an awareness of both poverty and PSA, but he minimized the PSA due to his father's mental illness. Therefore, his father's illness served as a protective factor, alleviating the impact of PSA. Below is the

excerpt related to the emergent themes, made stronger by upbringing, and resilience in spite of parent's co-occurring disorder:

> Uh if anything, I would say it made me stronger. Dealing with the issues of growing up poor and having a parent that suffered from alcoholism. My dad also was a Vietnam war vet so he suffered from posttraumatic stress um often he would revert back to as if he was in the war zone. So I could remember him coming over or him coming over and my mom was gone and he would like literally go into like act like he was in a war zone and like hide in the corner and act like he was shooting a gun and act like people was trying to kill him, that was crazy…. Well for me it made sense, I made sense of it because again he was a Vietnam war Veteran, purple heart actually, and um I kind of understood why he turned into alcohol given that he suffered from the post-traumatic stress by himself being strapped for cash working 5 jobs. So, in a way I didn't really blame him for being an alcoholic. I kind of understood it.

The following excerpts reveal an emergent theme which ending up being the superordinate theme of Marcus's academic resilience: "prove them wrong." Unlike most of the other participants, Marcus was a student who skipped class, but he knew how to retain information. Marcus reported that he did well on tests and he completed his homework. When asked how his upbringing impacted his identity and what school meant to him, Marcus replied,

> I think it made me who I am now. Again making me stronger dealing with all these, being ticked off not having the things normal kids have, um teachers telling

> me that I would never amount to anything or that I would never be nothing um, kind of made me who I am now, sort of like to prove them wrong….School never really meant nothing to me to be honest, for me I looked at school as the natural thing to do you went to school, although when high school I skip class a whole lot. Um, the only smart thing I did was I always go to class for a test. I always turned in my homework, but other than that going to class that just, uh I had a lot of absences in high school….I could retain information well so I had no problem taking tests and doing homework so that came easy to me and making decent grades came easy to me to say I never went to class I graduated with a 3.0.

Although Marcus initially stated school didn't mean anything to him, he was driven by obstacles and his resilience developed into academic resilience. He didn't have a supportive network of teachers who believed in him; it was quite the contrary. Marcus was the type of student teachers and counselors thought would never amount to anything. However, there was an increasing awareness of the value of education. Marcus did not accept the negative statements made about him, but he felt an internal obligation to prove that he was the opposite, and he became academically resilient.

Tracy. Tracy's case was unique in that her mother kept her father's substance abuse from her. She was aware of poverty and that her father became schizophrenic after the war, but she was completely unaware of his substance abuse. Emergent themes related to Tracy's academic resilience include: kids kept away from drugs, mother didn't expose children to drugs, mother's philosophy on education, and school led to the discovery of natural talents. Tracy reported that she learned of her father's drug addiction

when she was an adult. When discussing how her mother protected the children from her father's addiction, Tracy stated,

> just talking with my parents, you know, on an adult level now instead of a child, an adult level, they were able to share more things with me and that's when I found out that my dad did indulge in marijuana and, you know, things of that nature. And I was like wow, we never knew that you did those things. My mom said, I know that, that's right. I didn't want you to know. We didn't want you to be exposed of that….I knew my mom and dad had those party sometimes. They had friends over and they were just drinking and smoking, and stuff like that and we were always upstairs in our bedroom, playing or reading or something like that. And we never knew what was going downstairs and you did not go downstairs, if you did, you were downstairs, you used the bathroom and you came back upstairs, you didn't, you know, you might see something, you're not supposed to see. You were afraid, you might get in trouble so, you know, they just kept us away from that pretty much…so I guess that's how she kept it away from us for so long.

Unlike the other participants, Tracy was oblivious to her father's drug addiction. She indicated that, reflecting back, he took a lot of medication for schizophrenia and therefore it would have been difficult for her to determine if he was acting a certain way because of being under the influence of drugs.

Her mother's philosophy about education had a significant impact on Tracy's academic resilience:

> My mother was the strong believer in education. She believed that she's raised her daughters to never depend on anybody especially when you'd be marrying and you have a husband….And so, she pushed us every day to get our education, every single day….my academics were very good, very high academics. You know, and that's because I had a mother who was not taking coming to her home with bad grades. That was just a no, no. And we just knew that….I got older and I started realizing how difficult life could be without an education. I've really, really started to embrace education, you know, and say, "Well, this is what I need to have." Because one thing I learned off from my mother, once you get your education, no one can take it from you. They can take away your house or your possessions, or your car, but if you have an education, you can always get another later on in life. And that's based on having a good education, to be either have a good -- you know, a good job, stability and things of that nature. So, it wasn't important as the little kids but as I got old, I'm going to say when I'm late middle school, early high school, especially in college, it really became very important to me.

Here we see that Tracy's mother instilled in her a philosophy that education was critical to having a better life. Another unique factor in Tracy's case is that her mother planned to attend college, but before she left she discovered she was pregnant, and she didn't go.

Another emergent theme present in Tracy's case, "do better than we did," is indicative of how diligent her parents were in persuading her to embrace an education. As

a result, Tracy became the first person in her family to attend college; her sister followed in her footsteps and has already completed her doctorate.

> And so, people having that -- have that mother and father both to push us and say you guys can do this. Do better than what we did. You have so many opportunities out here that we did not -- my parents didn't have when they were coming up as a minority. And they say because we have so many more opportunities now, take advantage of those opportunities and get all the education that you can get.

Denise. Unlike any of the other participants, Denise has siblings who were in foster care placements due to juvenile delinquency; she reported that the highest education her siblings obtained was a GED. Witnessing the difficulties of other family members can be a protective factor helping an at-risk student to stay focused on their education (Williams & Bryan, 2012). Emergent themes that surfaced as a result of these experiences include: resilience in dysfunction, family separated by problems, going against the grain, and not settling for a GED:

> Two of my older brothers … got into troubles, stealing. The other one was in a foster home literally a mile away from us so that was just really strange and different to have a sibling who does not live with you but yet they live down the street with another family. My parents were no longer together, my father actually lived up the street from us but again both of my parents were alcoholics.

When discussing what it meant to be a minority first-generation student in her family, Denise replied,

> Unfortunately black sheep is usually a bad term in the family. For me I was actually the black sheep because everyone else went the other way. Meaning, no one else actually finished high school. All of my siblings have GED.

Denise was fortunate to have teachers who believed in her. Their influence in her life led to the exposure which ultimately set her on a path of academic achievement that developed into long-term academic resilience. Emergent themes related to these experiences include: kindergarten teacher as lifelong mentor, discovering what the world had to offer, protective relationships.

> I had teacher, my first year, my kindergarten year who really took interest in me and we eventually moved by about 3rd grade and so we lost contact with her. Eventually right about 6th grade got connected back with her again and ended up becoming my Godmother, still in my life today. I think that really had a huge impact because it was a totally different lifestyle, something different. Yeah really come out of and be able to see a little bit more of what really the world had to offer other than what I was submerged in.

Emergent themes related to the challenges Denise faced in school throughout the course of her education include: latent potential, receiving an extra push, education as an escape from dysfunction, taking education more seriously, being different than her family, and effort yields good results.

> I think along the way I did have a few individuals who really saw the potential in me that I didn't see. I did well up until about 9th grade when I say well I mean just average kid, I didn't study much, you did your homework and I probably was a B

> C student just by nature by not doing anything extra. Then, about 9th grade or so I think it was a counselor who was like "Oh I think you could upper bound you could benefit from that." Once I got an upper bound in 10th grade it really turned around. For me it was, you have to get good grades, we give stipends to you if you do well and that kind of thing. That motivated me then to study ... Then I got As and Bs and so after that I knew education was the key to get out of what I didn't want to be which was my family. I already knew I would pursue education and to go as high as I could in that area.

Summary of case-by-case emergent themes

This section has highlighted some of the emergent themes associated with the significant and distinctive experiences for each individual case. The emergent themes were descriptive and interpretative summaries of the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes developed line by line for each case. Due to the line-by-line analysis, each case has a significant number of emergent themes. For example, 194 themes emerged from Tracy's interview. However, the data was reduced by clustering related themes together to form codes. The next section will conclude the case-by-case analysis by providing all of the codes that were developed for each case.

Codes

To further reduce the data, I looked for patterns across themes in each individual case. I took each transcript, with the initial notes and emergent themes, and I typed the emergent themes along with the line number of the comment into a table in MS Word. I clustered the emergent themes according to how they fit together around a larger theme.

The name for each of these clusters became the code used in Dedoose. The final step prior to moving to the next case was entering the codes into Dedoose. Excerpts highlighted using the MS Word comments were also highlighted in Dedoose and coded. Each of the aforementioned steps was followed for all six cases. The codes in Dedoose describe the clusters of emergent themes, which interpret the initial line-by-line notes made from the transcripts. Four codes emerged as superordinate codes which further reduced the data. A stacked Venn diagram (see Figure 1) shows the relationships between these superordinate codes. Participants were exposed to or developed certain protective factors that influenced their school experiences; these combined factors eventually led to their academic resilience over time.

After all cases were individually analyzed, and before completing the cross-case analysis, I conducted one final analysis of each case to complete the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2012). The initial analysis of each individual case involved interpreting the parts to understand the whole transcript. Once the whole transcript was interpreted, the final analysis was looking back at parts of the transcript for deeper meaning. In a sense, it was similar to interpreting in reverse, since the entire transcript had been analyzed. While the initial analysis involved a line-by-line interpretation, the final analysis involved searching for excerpts that would produce deeper meaning.

Common to each case was a background of poverty and PSA. Each participant experienced a variety of similar and different protective factors. There were also previous school experiences that helped frame the participants' beliefs about school and education. Therefore, the previous school experiences functioned as a protective factor leading up to

academic resilience. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of these relationships. For example, Jessica grew up in the projects, and one of her protective factors was that she did well in school and stated that school was an escape for her. She believed she could get out of poverty by getting an education. Therefore, Jessica has remained in school and is pursuing her doctorate; she developed this fortitude as a result of her experiences and the context she grew up in. All of the codes from each case will fall under one of the four categories. For more details see Figure 1.

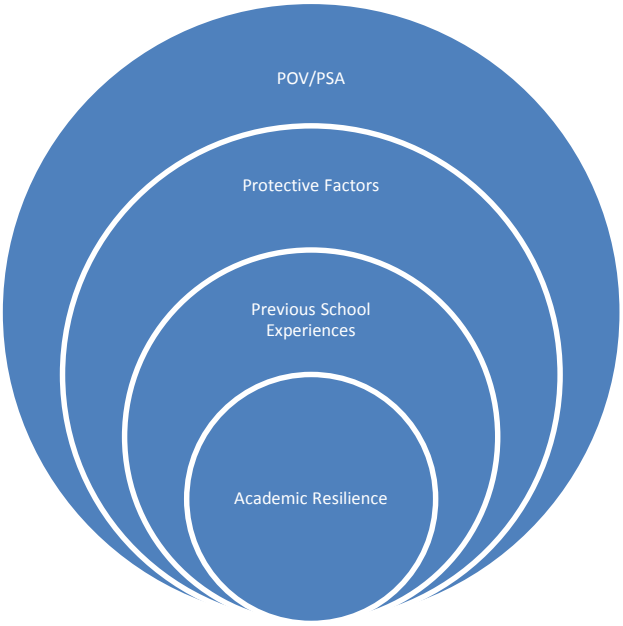

Figure 1. *Superordinate Codes by case*

Jessica. Analysis of the codes indicate that Jessica's academic resilience over time and throughout her present doctoral journey developed as a result of her future orientation, internal locus of control, and emergence of the multidimensional role of

school in her life. The co-occurring experience of poverty and PSA contributed to Jessica's wavering confidence and sense of powerlessness:

> just not feeling as confident in myself as I, you know, as I as I would, you know. I'm really just trying to remember. I'd probably say that's the biggest thing not feeling as confident in myself as you know I even as I got older as they became sober…. Um I mean it was depressing, it was sad. Because I couldn't do anything, there was nothing that I could do. I could cry, I could cause I never ever, they never knew that I knew cause I would never say anything, but um, it was very depressing it was hard it was difficult to know that your parents, my thing was I hope that they don't die, you know I would hate for me to come home one day and my mom be dead.

There were long-term consequences due to her experience of poverty and PSA. However, her previous academic success, future orientation, and internal locus of control functioned as a protective factors, allowing her to perceive school and education as something that empowered her and would ultimately equip her to break the cycle for her own children. When asked if she ever thought she wouldn't succeed because of her upbringing Jessica replied,

> nope, it was never because of my background…. it was never because of the things that happened in my life. I never used it, never ever once used it as an excuse.

For Jessica, school was a place that became the foreground of her life, and she kept PSA and poverty in the background. School became a place where she could invest

her energy, a place where she had something to look forward to, and a place that became bigger than her obstacles at home. As time went on, school not only became the place where she could maximize her potential, but also a place of generational and cultural achievement in her community:

> Oh it meant everything. I was the first person in my family to graduate college, um cause my sister when she graduated high school she went to the military so I was the first in my family to go to college. So it was a huge, by that time when I was in the 11th grade my mom was off drugs my dad was still doing it but my mom wasn't. Um, but it was huge. My mother bold she wanted everybody in the world, the church it was a, I was almost like the hometown hero of our neighborhood, even still now.

Jessica's mother was another important protective factor in her life. When asked what benefits she had that other kids may not have had, Jessica stated,

> Well the flipside was that my mother was very nurturing and she was always there emotionally and those were things that I know a lot of kids although they had the material things to have a mother that was caring, that although she was on drugs still did the best she could to take care of us and you she still didn't play like I still didn't disrespect her like that. Just having a mother who was there emotionally and that was you know caring and nurturing.

The result of Jessica being future oriented and having an internal locus of control was her desire and initiative to begin an online doctoral program. These same traits have enabled her to remain academically resilient in her online program:

> It was probably, it's probably not a good thing I think I was so numb and so focused on not being what everybody else was that I really it was like I got this goal in my life plus I was young, my mom said that I didn't care I would walk to school in the rain, there was no way I was gonna allow myself to be sucked in to any of that stuff I wanted more I was gonna do better and it was also like an escape for me school was my escape how school is for people school is my escape even now that's why you know I went back for my Ph.D., is an escape but it's also a way for me you know like I said to build a legacy for my kids but, as I was a kid I was always had that tunnel vision.

This is further confirmed by Jessica's perspective on how her background influenced her to persistence in school:

> Um, kind of like what I said before, it's knowing that I wanted to leave a legacy for my children. I did not want my kids to have a defeated attitude or to think that that you have to buckle based on the obstacles that you've faced in life. But the biggest thing that identified was to break some curses and to set up, to set up um a foundation an educational foundation just a legacy for my children to be. That was my motivation that I be an example for my kids, for other kids in the neighborhood where I grew up and my other family members.

Jessica reported that the easiest part of the online doctoral program was the flexibility. The main challenges associated with an online doctoral program are the lack of physical interaction with instructors and the lack of structure. However, when asked how she overcomes this, Jessica replied,

> I try to connect with people outside and one of my professors I really I established a great relationship with him and he became my mentor so you know he was able to help me through it but you know I also just connected with people.

Kember (1995), who conducted seminal research on attrition from online programs, indicated that students who take responsibility for the outcome are the ones who succeed. These are the students who are able to overcome the challenges associated with online learning and leverage the convenience as Jessica did. She stated that the lack of structure made it difficult, but this was also why she chose the online program–because of the flexibility. Jessica has been academically resilient up through her current online doctoral program because of her internal locus of control and future orientation that developed as a result of her hardship. See Table 3 for a detailed summary of Jessica's codes.

Table 3

Codes for Jessica

POV/PSA
Co-occurrence of POV and PSA
Parents stuck in a trap
Wavering confidence
Powerlessness
Protective Factors
Nurturing mother
Future orientation
Internal locus of control
Multidimensional role of school
Identity resilience
Previous School Experiences
Previous academic success
Multidimensional role of school
Hometown hero/first-generation student
Academic resilience
Motivation for doctorate
Online doctoral experience
Online learning
Internal locus of control
Future orientation
Multidimensional role of school

Craig. The background of Craig's experience reveals he was somewhat sheltered from the full impact of poverty and PSA. He reported his father was a functional addict and his mother worked multiple jobs. In spite of his father's murder due to drug trafficking, Craig developed resilience.

> You know, it has made me resilient, simply put. Um, everything that I went through, you know, we had to get through it. And, um, you had to pick up the boots and keep going. You know my mom would say even right after when my father was killed, we, um, had the funeral, went and came back and got right back into school. We didn't take time out to grieve and to figure out what the heck just happened, go to therapy; nope. Get back on board and keep going.

Here, Craig is describing something he has learned as a result of everything he's been through. This contributes to his success, because he learned not to quit or give up on life due to a painful experience. He maintained an internal locus of control through his experience of trauma, as evidenced by him demonstrating that no external situation has the power to cut off your ability to succeed.

At first glance, it was not clear how Craig had remained academically resilient up through his present doctoral journey. His previous academic success seemed to be more connected with his fear and respect for his mother than his love for school:

> Yep, you know, school, um, school was more of a, it was, it was like a place that you, you, you, I went because I had to go. It was, it was like a means to an end. You know, you go to school and you get your high school diploma. Yeah, so. Um, fun, but not really fun. It was a place to go, talk to people, meet people, but

> mostly you just went because you went. School was what you do. You know, I don't, I don't, I don't have any, I didn't have issues with it. My mother beat the hell out of us if we didn't do good, so.

Although Craig's mother wanted him to succeed in school, she was unable to provide him with the help he needed to do well. Craig developed an internal locus of control, taking responsibility for his academic success:

> it was, it's what you did, I guess. When I started getting good grades I guess then I started to, um, it, it was good thing, it, it, it was more of a positive experience…. it [his family background] impeded because there really was not support at home to help, um, with things that you didn't know. I think a part of it was figured out on my own. Another part was talking to the instructors and other students. And so, we did that a lot to talk to other students.

Craig stated his wife, who is also a doctoral student, motivated him to begin an online doctoral program. Even as an adult, Craig believed school was a means to an end. This indicates his inner belief that education is necessary to get him where he desires to go in life. When asked about what it means to be in an online doctoral program, Craig replied,

> It actually pretty cool. You know, um, I thought being in the on line program was gonna suck, but it actually is not too bad. Again, it gives me more flexibility and you know, being a student is a good feeling. It's like, okay yeah, you're working on this last degree….I think the biggest difficulty is when you don't know something or when you can't see something, as an example a template, then it, it,

> it tends to causes you to drag on…. I begin to procrastinate and, um, and so, that is the biggest thing is just having to figure stuff out or just go blindly and do what you think they're asking on these papers and answering these questions only to find out that oh, I did it right.

See Table 4 for a detailed summary of Craig's data.

Table 4

Codes for Craig

POV/PSA
Dad as a functional addict
Never felt poverty
Parents' dysfunctional relationship
Risk and trauma
Protective Factors
Internal locus of control
Identity resilience
Trauma resilience
Previous School Experiences
Previous academic success
School is a means to an end
Minority first-generation college student
Academic resilience
Trauma resilience
Identity resilience
School as a means to an end
Internal locus of control

Mary. Mary was driven towards academic resilience because of her desperate desire to escape both poverty and the pattern of dysfunctional relationships she had seen her mother experience. This desire emerged after Mary had a greater awareness of her circumstances:

> At the beginning it didn't mean anything because I didn't know I was poor. When I found out, not having a phone, and I didn't realize I was poor then. When I got my phone, we got a phone in the house, then I realized what everybody was missing, because I'd be able to just call my friends. I was like, wow. When we started driving, I realized I could go where I wanted to go. Like, wow. But when you don't have, you don't think about it. Maybe for me, when I think back I can remember eating cheese and sugar sandwiches. Back then, to me was a snack. When I reflect back, that's all we had. My mother, she never said we was poor, she acted as though we weren't poor.

With the revelation of poverty, Mary developed a different perspective about life, which caused her to be more determined.

Mary believed she did not have to be limited to her mother's experiences. Her experience implies that she also had an internal locus of control because she refused to use external circumstances as an excuse for failure. When asked what school meant to her, Mary replied,

> Everything. The biggest thing, it meant I wouldn't be like my mother. I loved her. I didn't want to be poor, after I realized I was poor. I never wanted to be in a verbally abusive relationship, knew that would never happen. People, when I was

> in college would say, let's go to the club, or you know they're having a dance at the campus, and I would go. They'd be drinking, I'd never drink, because of my stepfather. You couldn't, to this day, never will get me drinking, cause I thought it would get to you. I just, a path I didn't want to go down. I felt like my mother depended on men too much, so I wanted to be independent. So it was a long time before I got married. That's why, to find the right man, and I wasn't going to have any kids before I married. I think it was because, she struggled. I wasn't going to do that.

Another important aspect of the development of academic resilience for Mary is that she needed to be in an environment where she could develop identity resilience. The following excerpt provides a small glimpse of her confidence growing up:

> Growing up, I thought I was ugly. I thought I was not going to go too far. Both of my friends were high yellow, they were high yellow and I was real dark. They called me a lot darkie and big butt. That definitely bothered my identity. I never was into boys. That could have something to do with it, I don't know. I didn't get into boys until I was probably a sophomore in high school. Even then, I still wasn't, boys I had once that I thought was cute. That was tough, because it damages your self-esteem.

A significant protective factor that contributed to Mary's academic resilience was attending a predominantly Black institution:

> I think part of that too was, I chose to go to a Black college, an all-Black college on purpose. And I wanted to know more about my heritage, because I felt like,

growing up the majority of my middle school and high school were predominantly White. So to me, I felt like I was always having to prove myself, because of my color….I wanted to go to an all-Black college so I could learn more about me. That was motivating because you saw some wonderful Black speakers that came who were intelligent, educated, from PhD's, to celebrities…. I don't know if I would have continued if I would have went to a predominately White college. After dealing with personal issues at home, dealing with just growing up in the community sometimes, feeling that you less than anybody else ... My best friend was high yellow with green eyes. She always got the attention. If I would have went to a predominately White college, I think I might have still felt the same way, because in my high school, I didn't have a problem. I got along with White people, but it wasn't just the White people that talked about you back then. It was other Black people. I think just that college atmosphere really helped me accept my identity and again gave me the perseverance, because it was all about you got to be better than the next person when you graduate. It's funny, because it wasn't even always about you got to be better than the person sitting next to you. You got to be better than the person you will be interviewing with. This is why you in college, so you can graduate. That was pounded in us at the college. They would say that collectively. I didn't even hear of that in school. In high school, nobody ever said you got to go to college, you got to build yourself up. It's about carrying yourself. I ain't hear that in high school.

As a minority first-generation college student, Mary did not receive the affirmation and support she needed in high school, even though her basketball coach was her mentor. She needed more to succeed in the college environment and to bring balance to the plethora of attacks to her self-esteem that she experienced growing up in the projects. Mary developed identity resilience, overcame the challenges of her childhood, and decided to return to school for a doctorate to make a difference. Here, Mary reflects on how her upbringing impacted her identity and how she decided to begin an online doctoral program:

> I would definitely say that the way everything is around growing up culturally, environmentally continues to push me, to drive me. I don't think that will change, because that will give me a competitive spirit. I am always trying to better myself, and I'm probably my hardest critic, but it also keeps me guarded…. I was working for a company in an educational firm and uh, when I was working for that education firm I had a lot of students that would you know enroll in school and I noticed that a lot of them were women. And uh I would hear different stories and they were similar to mine which is I can't move up within my job you know I find myself under paid and all of that and I just became fascinated with why, why are we always being held back as women and as black women. And uh, I decided that you know, how can I make a difference, how can I help and how can at the same time helping them I can help me and one of my desires was to become a facilitator to become a teacher and uh I just said the only way I'll be able to compete is I need to get my doctorate degree. And if I wanted to consult I need my doctorate

> degree. I wanted to add credibility because I felt as a black female that it would be harder if I didn't have it, so that when I decided to go get my degree.

Mary's journey of academic resilience is intricately attached to her development of identity resilience, in that she believed that it would be harder to advance without it, as a Black female. This also implies that academic resilience provides acceptance, validation, and confirmation to her children that they do not need to be limited in their goals:

> I just really wanted to do better for myself. What can I get that will put me in a position where opportunities are open? I don't even have my doctorate yet, but I remember talking about going for my doctorate degree, and just because I was going for it, people would talk to me, and that's different…. I still want better for my kids. I want my kids to do better than me. I can only hope that what they see from me and from the outside is a reflection of what I tell them from the inside. I pound education into them…. you can ask them about college. They're going to tell you they're going to go to college. Where do you start? They'll tell you, Associates, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate. They'll tell you all those 4. Do I expect that they'll go all those 4? No. I would love for them to go right to the Bachelor's and keep going.

See Table 5 for a detailed summary of Mary's data.

Table 5

Codes for Mary

POV/PSA
Revelation of poverty
PSA
Mother's dysfunctional relationships
Life in the projects
Protective Factors
Life in the projects
Perspectives
Determination
Internal locus of control
Previous School Experiences
Previous academic success
Determination
Experience as a mentee
Internal locus of control
Identity resilience
Predominantly Black institution
Academic resilience
Online Ph.D. experience
Exposing opportunity
Transformational exposure
Internal locus of control

Tracy. As stated earlier, Tracy grew up unaware of her father's substance abuse. However, she had clear knowledge of poverty because her mother was open about the nature of the financial situation at that time. Tracy reported that there were times when poverty negatively impacted her ability to go to school:

> I would say some difficulties might have been getting to school sometimes. Sometimes I may not have been able to get to school because I just simply did not have the money to catch the bus. The school district where I went to school, we had to catch the city bus to school. And we had to have at that time it was 65 cents for students to ride the bus one way. So you had to have a $1.30 every day to be able to go to school where you think $1.30 that's not a lot of money, when you multiply that by five days and four weeks, you know it adds up. It adds up. And there were times, there were times that I just did not have some money to go school. So, I just didn't go, you know? I didn't have 65 cents to go, I didn't have any bus tickets, you know, the student bus tickets to go. So I just couldn't go, you know. And there were times that, it was difficult. I can remember my mother sitting us down, down on a table one day and saying, "These are the bills and this is the money that we have. And this will be what we have leftover. We got to make this work for a whole month." Because my dad got paid once a month and you're looking at that as a kid, you'd think, "Okay, that's a lot of money." But when I became an adult, I looked back on it and it's like that was not a lot of money feeding a family of six, you know?

The support and encouragement offered by her parents was one of the primary protective factors in her life; they pushed her to do better than they did. Tracy's school experiences that built determination and helped facilitate the qualities she needed to be academically resilient, include her previous academic success and her participation in the creative arts in high school:

> I was very smart at school in terms of Reading, Language Arts, English, you know, writing. I could do those things. Math and Science, I struggled in. My whole entire educational career, I struggled in Science and Math, but Reading, Writing, and English, I could blossom. I really knew, you know, that -- those subjects were easy for me….I was in the high school marching band. That was a lot of fun. I guess for me. Music came naturally for me. I just kind of gravitated to music because I was the -- young girl. I just always loved music. So, that was fun. Yeah, I guess in hindsight, it was easy. Dance was always easy for me. I was also in the high school dance company. And that was something that I enjoyed to do, really was good at it. And it was a lot of fun and it was easy for me. It was a lot -- you know, really easy. So, I guess being in the performing arts area, that was the easy part for me at school.

Tracy flourished in arts because of her experiences in school. As a result, one of the first reasons she decided to get her doctorate was to open her own school.

> I made a decision to start a doctoral program because number one the first reason is I want to one day have my own performing art school. I feel like so many areas within our country, they want to start these charter schools and want to start these

> performing art schools but they always start at the 9th grade level. And I'm a strong believer in education in the arts through the arts. So, I want to start at the kindergarten level. I want to catch these kids when they're young and really drop some seeds and plant some seeds in them when they're little and just watch that seed grow and blossom and flourish into this fine outstanding performing, I mean, dynamic singer or dynamite performer or dancer, that we had nurtured these kids since kindergarten.

Tracy's ongoing experience in the performing arts was an opportunity to establish a meaningful relationship with her dance and band coach. Additionally, Tracy developed fortitude, self-confidence, and the attitude to make it work. Ultimately, this became the essence of her academic resilience. When discussing what it means to be a minority first-generation student with her upbringing, she replied,

> I feel like being a student I try to be a great example for the students that I am currently exposed to at this time in my life. When I tell the stories of my childhood and how I grew up—but yet you see I was able to overcome that and I was able to overcome inside indulge into education. I really want to be an example. It's hard sometimes, especially being a student now and you're mother, and you're wife, and you work, you know? And you try to do things to take care of yourself and, you know, things of that nature. It's like where do I find the time…To stop and study, and I have to read this chapter. You have to kind of manage your time and you're so busy at your job. And your kids need, need, need, need. And then your husband will say, "What about me? I need too." You know,

and you try to juggle it. So, it's a lot of--lots to deal with. But we make it work, you know? And as women, we find ways to make everything work and they get balanced, and we still keep a smile on our face. And we still able to, you know, crack jokes every now and then to try to bring some laughter into the house, you know? And as a grad student, it's difficult and like the higher you get in education, the more difficult it become. But we make it work, you know? We just kind of pull up or tighten our boot straps and say you know, we got to do, we got to do and we make work.

See Table 6 for a detailed summary of Tracy's data.

Table 6

Codes for Tracy

POV/PSA
Never ever knew about PSA
It was a struggle
Protective Factors
Parents' charge to do better than we did
Awareness
Mindset about circumstances
Family values
Previous School Experiences
Previous academic success
Determination
Internal locus of control
Identity resilience
Creative arts
Minority first-generation college student
Academic resilience
Online Ph.D. experience/ Make it work
Exposing opportunity
Internal locus of control

Marcus. Marcus's academic resilience is the product of his determination and his willingness to persevere in spite of teachers and counselors who did not believe in him:

> It all goes back to again, uh in high school being told that you know you would never amount to nothing, matter fact my guidance counselor told me that I start off in junior college because she didn't think I should get to go to a 4 year university. So anytime someone tell me that I can't do something, it makes me want to prove them wrong.

Unlike many of the other participants who had either a parent, teacher, or coach to motivate them, Marcus's determination and internal locus of control are the key factors that motivated him. When asked about any supports he could recall that helped motivate him, Marcus replied,

> I think that, it's hard to say. I didn't really have any support. I've always been a type of person when I set my mind to it, I do it. None of my close friends went to college, and so that's pretty much the whole reason why I left and went to Grambling because none of my friends went to college I didn't want to be distracted by them. But I really didn't have any support system, being my mom was always in church so no support from her, dad alcoholism, so not really support from him, so education wasn't really stressed in my family or my upbringing.

Marcus could not recall any supports. When asked why he believed he pursued higher education, since it wasn't emphasized, he replied:

> I think going from, from high school to college I just thought was the natural order. Most people I guess tell their kids that you have to go to college after you graduate from high school you have to go to college, I was never told that, but I just always felt as though from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college, so I just went with the natural progression of school.

Marcus's is an example of someone whose protective factors came from within. When asked about his decision to begin an online doctoral program, he replied,

> I always said that I would stay in school until I became a doctor. And so that was a goal when I first entered into college.

See Table 7 for a detailed summary of Marcus's data.

Table 7

Codes for Marcus

POV/PSA
Financially strapped
Obstacles to overcome
Parental mental illness
PSA
Protective Factors
Mother
Prove them wrong
Previous School Experiences
Prove them wrong
Determination
Internal locus of control
Identity resilience
Minority first-generation college student
Academic resilience
Ph.D. long-term goal
Online learning
Internal locus of control

Denise. Denise experienced a series of transformational experiences that helped develop her academic resilience, such as relationships with teachers and extracurricular programs. Additionally, Denise had previous academic success and an internal locus of control:

> I love school, I actually enjoyed school….I love learning, maybe it was if I think back emotionally it's probably was more of an escape. I've always been a book learner, I could read on my own which is why I think I do so well or have done well in online learning because it's a lot of video of self-learning, self-taught. You got to be assertive to going, get the information yourself and I think I've succeeded in that aspect of it because I've always just been able to just delve into a book and learn.

Not only did Denise do well in school, but her academic success was the gateway to her professional career, which motivated her to continue her education.

> I ended up really having a knack for Math and loving Chemistry and those kinds of things without really a lot of effort which again for me would just be the God given talents that I was given. That was going to be my but of course I didn't recognize that in high school, with much later once I got on a career path that I realized oh I'm actually really good at math without having to really think about it. That of course turned into an accounting career.

Denise stated that she desired to attend college, but she did not have the guidance to help her with the enrollment process. In spite of the difficulties she faced along the

way, her internal locus of control and determination enabled her to commit to pursuing her doctorate.

> I knew that I wanted to go to college, did not know what that meant. Knew I could not afford it so I really was limited in my thinking about how far I could go. I settled for community college when actually I got accepted to various other universities but no one explained to me about financial aid and some of those components so I felt compelled to stay home. Doing that I ended up getting pregnant my first year in college. My mom was not very supportive at all but I still was determined to stay in school and so I did. I stayed in school full time and work part time. Refused to get on welfare, refused to get food stamps and yeah struggled with my son for several years before I finished community college. It took me a little bit longer about two and a half years. Then I went on to get my Bachelor's degree in Accounting. Then I went off for my Master's and then currently working on a PhD.

See Table 8 for a detailed summary of Denise’s data.

Table 8

Codes for Denise

POV/PSA
Life in the projects
Family dysfunction
Alcoholism
Protective Factors
Perspectives
Transformational experiences
Previous School Experiences
Previous academic success
Internal locus of control
Identity resilience
Minority first-generation college student
Previous online experiences
Academic resilience
Online doctoral experiences
Internal locus of control
Determination

Results

The first step of the cross-case analysis involved laying out the six MS Word charts with the emergent themes and Dedoose codes and looking across them using the five analytic processes described by Smith et al. (2012). These include, (a) abstraction, by creating a new superordinate theme for the cross-case cluster; (b) subsumption, by allowing an existing code to become a superordinate theme; (c) differences among codes were analyzed using polarization; (d) codes emerged around the context or events in participant's lives; and (e) numeration, by linking codes with emergent themes that appeared multiple times.

A master table of themes was developed in MS Word to track the cross-case clusters of themes developed as a result of the cross-case analysis. Codes were added and adjusted in Dedoose, as needed, to match the master table of themes. This was primarily done for the purpose of using the data analysis features in Dedoose. In addition to looking across the hard copy charts to develop cross-case codes, I utilized the following qualitative analytic features in Dedoose: (a) packed code cloud, (b) code co-occurrence, and (c) code application. These features were used to strengthen the analysis conducted using the charts developed in MS Word.

An analysis of the cross case data using the packed code cloud feature in Dedoose revealed that 93 excerpts were related to academic resilience and 139 excerpts were related to protective factors. The code co-occurrence analysis revealed three main sets of codes that appeared together: (a) protective factors and parents appeared together 19 times, (b) identity and protective factors appeared together 20 times, and (c) protective

factors and academic resilience appeared together 19 times. Protective factors were co-occurring in each case. This indicates that there were protective aspects to the relationships with parents and the process of academic resilience that mitigated the risk of poverty and PSA. For more information see Table 9.

Table 9

Protective Factors and Parents

Participant	Excerpt
Jessica	Um, well my mother she was very supportive of education so…despite what was going on she always made sure that I you know completed my homework and that I excelled. I couldn't come home with any grade less than a B.
Craig	He still made, you know, he still worked. Um, yeah, he was not like a drug addict to the sense of he was you know, it wasn't like he was addicted to the point where he was not able to function, function very well.
Mary	but my mother decided we couldn't afford to put me into a robotics college. I ended up going for engineering. They got me to do a degree in engineering and business, and I just knew with them continuing to support me.
Tracy	My family was very supportive. My mother--and as I said before, my mother was the strong believer in education.
Denise	My mom helped out a lot at the school so I do remember those years that she was always there helping out as a parent.
Marcus	Being a pastor's child, my mom praying for me uh despite our upbringing. In my opinion, it kept me alive with all that trouble I got into. So the benefit of prayer, I know that sounds crazy but now it's pretty much the most benefit I could get.

Identity is associated with protective factors for several reasons. First, as the participants overcame hardships, they developed the belief that they were capable of achieving. Therefore, they did not believe they could *not* achieve, but quite the contrary: they *had to* achieve. Second, the realization of poverty challenged them to think differently about who they needed to become and what they needed to accomplish to change their trajectory. Finally, there was an experience of understanding identity through the Christian faith. See Table 10 for a detailed summary of this data.

Table 10

Protective Factors and Identity

Participant	Excerpt
Jessica	It was never because of my background it was just I mean I don't know if it was, it was just things that you just think It's hard but it was never because of the things that happened in my life I never used it, never ever once used it as an excuse.
Craig	Yeah I mean that's the huge piece that, even today, I still have to work through. But um, I really, didn't really have a strong sense of self and who I was and, um, you know, from that angle. So the impact there, um, I think is still far reaching that I have to stay grounded to remember that I am who I am not because of what I do but just because of who God has created me to be.
Mary	The biggest thing, it meant I wouldn't be like my mother. I loved her. I didn't want to be poor, after I realized I was poor.
Tracy	So, I look back on the things that I went through. And again, I think it makes me a stronger person. It made me want to work hard when I started having children, when I became a mother because I didn't want them to be exposed to the thing that I have been exposed to. I didn't want them to have to deal with, you know, rodents in the house or pest, you know, bugs in the house. And my kids have not had to deal with that. So it made me work harder to achieve more so my kids would have what I didn't have.
Denise	Yeah today I'm a Christian. Highly involved in church so that has really shaped my identity. I know who I am, I know that I'm a child of God and so that has really helped me because back then like I said I didn't have an identity much.
Marcus	So anytime someone tell me that I can't do something, it makes me want to prove them wrong.

The third and final co-occurring across case-code analysis is significant because ultimately, it's the protective factors that helped promote academic resilience by mitigating risk. As mentioned previously, there were several types of protective factors, including: the desire for achievement, view of school as a way to change one's future, and view of education as necessary. Even Marcus, who reported that school never meant anything to him, saw school as something necessary. These perspectives of school and education as necessary and positive parts of life decreased the participants' risk of academic failure by connected with improvement and success to become protective factors. For more detail see Table 11.

Table 11

Protective Factors and Academic Resilience

Participant	Excerpt
Jessica	I was very optimistic in spite you know things that happened in my life. I always wanted to go to school, I excelled in school…despite what was going on at home, I put more of my energy into school.
Craig	it was like a means to an end. You know, you go to school and you get your high school diploma.
Mary	I loved being a student. I loved math. To me, school was an outlet. Again, I knew I wasn't going back. I didn't want to be like my mother. I felt the only way I could get out was school.
Tracy	I know, the only way for me to achieve that goal is to continue my education. And so, once I have a master's degree then I decided I'm going to get a specialist degree, and from there I'd say, "You know what, let me just go on." I got specialist I'm so close to the doctorate let me just go on and get my doctorate.
Denise	I love learning, maybe it was if I think back emotionally it' probably was more of an escape. I've always been a book learner, I could read on my own which is why I think I do so well or have done well in online learning because it's a lot of video of self-learning, self-taught.
Marcus	I think going from, from high school to college I just thought was the natural order. Most people I guess tell their kids that you have to go to college after you graduate from high school you have to go to college, I was never told that, but I just always felt as though from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college, so I just went with the natural progression of school

In short, the analysis conducted using the Dedoose software was helpful in that it revealed the major relationships between codes and allowed for quick access to excerpts.

The first cross-case analysis was conducted using the MS Word table of themes and the results of the co-occurring code analysis matched the table. However, the combination of looking across the hard copy-coded transcripts allowed for a more rigorous analyses than using either method alone. The results of the hard copy analysis is presented in the following sections.

Research Question One

How do MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA perceive and interpret their academic resilience? Participants perceive and interpret their academic resilience as a result the following four factors (a) determination, (b) evolving realization of the value of education, (c) paving the way for others, and (d) leveraging strengths to manage an online doctoral program.

Determination. Participants communicated their academic resilience through a series of experiences marked by determination. Jessica stated, "there was no way I was gonna allow myself to be sucked in to any of that stuff I wanted more I was gonna do better." There was an inner drive and desire to overcome the situation she lived in. Likewise, Mary reported, "Whether negative or positive, because the negative things drove me more to not want to be that way." Marcus said, "Teachers telling me that I would never amount to anything or that I would never be nothing um, kind of made me who I am now, sort of like to prove them wrong." Part of becoming academically resilient for these participants was determination in good or bad situations. With support or with no support, part of the experience of being academically resilient is becoming and being determined.

It is “becoming determined” because the participants were determined throughout the course of the academic careers. It is “being determined” because participants must continue to develop greater determination in their doctoral programs. In reflecting on her past, Tracy reported, “I look back on the things that I went through. And again, I think it makes me a stronger person. It made me want to work hard.” In reflecting on her current life, she stated, “As a grad student, it's difficult. It's like the higher you get in education, the more difficult it becomes. But we make it work, you know.” There is an inner strength to do whatever it takes to succeed, because she learned that success is earned. When reflecting on how his background influences him to continue school, Craig reported, “It just kind of gave me the ability to just keep pushing.” Similarly, Denise says, about the challenging situation of an unplanned pregnancy in college, “my mom was not very supportive at all but I was determined to stay in school and so I did. I stayed in school full time and worked part time.” Each of these participants had their own hurdles to overcome. Their determination was part of the experience of academic resilience that enabled them to overcome those hurdles.

Evolving realization of the value of education. Academic resilience was also the product of the evolving realization of the value of education. This process unfolded differently for each participant, but the revelation of the value of education seems to have increased their determination and strengthened their internal locus of control.

Marcus provides a clear example of this evolving understanding of education. Earlier in life his view was, “school never really meant nothing to me to be honest.” He stated, “Although in high school I skipped class a whole lot. Um, the only smart thing I

did was I always go to class for a test I always turned in my homework…. making decent grades came easy to me to say I never went to class I graduated with a 3.0." There is a discrepancy here, because he said school didn't mean anything, he skipped class, yet he did homework, which is usually neglected by truant students. As described earlier, Marcus had an inner need to prove wrong those teachers and counselors who did not believe in him. This pattern of proving them wrong seems to have been the beginning of discovering the meaning of an education. After sharing about his personal and academic journey, Marcus stated, "I always said that I would stay in school until I became a doctor. And so that was a goal when I first entered into college so…. And then 6 years later I got my MBA and then I graduated with my MBA I was like I might as well keep going until I accomplish my educational goal…. It means a lot." A person is more likely to develop academic resilience if they have personally grown to realize the value of education. Marcus gained this understanding and it transformed him from someone who did not care about school to someone who made "educational goals."

Mary, Tracy, and Denise all came to understand that their lives would not be much different than what they grew up in unless they were educated. Tracy stated, "As I got older and I started realizing how difficult life could be without an education. I've really, really started to embrace education, you know, and say, 'Well, this is what I need to have.' " Likewise, Mary said, "the only way out I thought was my education. Without education, couldn't make the money I needed." Upon learning that good grades could be rewarded, Denise disclosed, "Then I got As and Bs and so after that I knew education was the key to get out of what I didn't want to be which was my family." Prior to this

experience, Denise shared that she was B or C student, because she didn't recognize her own potential. However, the revelation that education could change her life contributed to her academic resilience.

Jessica reported, "I knew that once I graduated from high school, I didn't even think about college but it was just graduating from high school that I was ugh you know…I was gonna make something of myself." She was determined and planned to complete high school. However, initially, she didn't think about attending college. Each of the participants had their own awakening experience when they understood education as more than school. Part of their academic resilience was the realization that education could change their lives; as the next theme will show, it would also give them the influence to change other lives.

Paving the way for others. Each of the participants in this study is a minority first-generation student of higher education. Paving the way for others is a theme that presents as part of their experience of academic resilience. This theme represents the function of academic resilience that extends beyond the participant themselves and into their families and communities. It is representative of a vicarious victory for their children and the people they mentor, as explained by the following excerpts:

> ***Mary.*** You know, I wanna help pull other people up to where I am.
>
> ***Denise.*** I also thought I would be an example to my other siblings that came behind me.
>
> ***Jessica.*** I wanted to leave a legacy for my children. I did not want my kids to um to have a defeated attitude or to think that that you have to buckle based on the

obstacles that you've faced in life. But the biggest thing that identified was to break some curses and to set up, to set up um a foundation an educational foundation just a legacy for my children to be. That was my motivation that I be an example for my kids, for other kids in the neighborhood where I grew up and my other family members…I do it for my younger cousins and other kids in the community and kids that I mentor who have lived similar experiences.

Tracy. That's what made me continue to pursue my education because I want to be that role model for my children as well as for other African-American girls.

Marcus. It means a lot because at now, I felt like I have to set an example, one for when I do have kids and for my nieces and nephews…I feel as though I have to set that example that it can be done.

Craig. You know, being that example, you know, now my baby brother, he also completed his bachelor's degree.

Their hope is that their academic resilience as minority first-generation students has influenced and will influence other people. As a result of them influencing others, they themselves are influenced and motivated. In this manner, this particular theme is part of the experience of being academic resilience and a protective factor.

Leveraging strengths to manage an online doctoral program. This final theme related to the experience of academic resilience explores where the participants have landed in their present academic journeys. Thus far, the results have looked at the process of academic resilience over the years and decades. However, this theme of leveraging strengths to manage an online doctoral program deals with the continued process and the

results of academic resilience. They have leveraged their strengths in an online doctoral program by learning how to manage the flexibility of the online doctoral program and by having an internal locus of control. The following excerpts highlight each participant's thoughts about the challenges of an online doctoral program:

> ***Tracy.*** As far as my doctoral program, it's a lot of reading and a lot of writing. I found myself writing a lot of papers and reading, reading, reading, reading, reading, researching and researching, and you know, looking up stuff and trying to, you know, make sure you saying it right, citing the right sources and stuff of that nature. And then you find yourself typing the paper that I have to literally take my time and do this. I can't just rush and do 20 pages. You got to literally take your time and do this stuff… Once you go back and look at it, you'd be like, "Oh my God. I cannot believe I actually typed 20 of my pages," you know that's the difficult part is like I said, finding the time to do the research, to do the writing, to do the reading, and things of that nature. And then you're thinking about you want to do things for yourself, you know, but you got to get this done as well. So, that's the most difficult part. I like online classes because I have that freedom of still being at home with my children. And I can always leave the computer and go deal with them right quick and it comes back from the computer. As opposed if I was in a classroom, the traditional classroom setting, I can't leave my classes. I got to -- you know, my kids are calling. "Mom, this is going on. That's going on." And it's either stay in class or leave to go deal with the kid. You know so, I like the online and I think it's a wonderful tool to have for people like

me who can't be in a traditional class anymore. But however, I feel like that we have lots more work to do, the work for me, the task is more challenging because you have so much independent studying to do.

Jessica. Being in a classroom with other people you know going to class, having that structure. You know with online you pretty much set your own schedule. But you know just being able to connect to other people, having professors you know right there in your face that you can talk to and you don't have to worry about it taking so long to respond back to you. So just that one-on-one personal interaction….physical interaction. I try to connect with people outside and one of my professors I really I established a great relationship with him and he became my mentor so you know he was able to help me through it but you know I also just connected with people.

Mary. I think the biggest thing is uh is not having that intimate one on one relationship. I can't just walk in the door and you know just sit down and talk to my professors, it's still on line you know so that that's to me that's still a barrier. But that's also why I get excited when I do have the opportunity to do the residency because I do have that chance to come together. But I like the independence I do like the independence being able to go in and work when I need to work…. Picking a good chair [laughs] because then you can, when you have a good chair, a good committee member that's very supportive, they have that open door so I can, I can't see you but I can pick up the phone and call you so

I don’t have to constantly just sending posts, you know I can pick up the phone say hey I’m struggling here.

Marcus. Um, physical contact with instructors. Not having the contact being as I being as I switched from traditional into long distance learning. The difficulty is not being able to physically talk face to face with my instructors, which is something that I had in high school, something that I had as an undergrad. Something that I had even in my MBA, so going from that to now, it was difficult.

Craig. I think the biggest difficulty is when you don't know something or when you can't see something, as an example a template, then it tends to causes you to drag on. I begin to procrastinate and, um, that is the biggest thing is just having to figure stuff out or just go blindly and do what you think they're asking on these papers and answering these questions only to find out that oh, I did it right. It took me forever to get a jump start because I was overthinking it and, um, so yeah.

Denise. I don't know if I had any difficulties. Again, I've enjoyed it. I enjoyed learning and I can do well without having to interact with people in a classroom. I think probably the most difficult thing was working in teams. From an expectation stand point, one of my giftings is just being organized and so meeting deadlines is critical and working in teams you have high expectations. Not everybody can deliver and so that was very frustrating for me because being in a team if they didn't deliver you still had to, it didn't matter. Really what that just forced me to do was to push the deadlines up so that when people didn't deliver

> you have enough time to be able to react to them. Yeah once I was able to finally get pass that and recognize that that is going to be an issue throughout the whole program that was probably my only difficulty.

There are several smaller themes nested within these excerpts, which describe how participants leveraged their strengths to manage an online doctoral program. The seven main difficulties of an online doctoral program are: (a) lack of structure, (b) doctoral workload, (c) time management, (d) asynchronous learning format and delayed responses, (e) transitioning from ground courses to online, (f) technological challenges, and (g) adjusting to working in teams. It should be noted that these perceived challenges are subjective to the participants in this study. The five main ways students have overcome these challenges are (a) connecting with other students and faculty, (b) improving time management, (c) using residencies to their advantage, (d) establishing a strong dissertation committee, and (e) enduring the online doctoral workload. Nested within each of these five steps are initiatives each student must take in order for these things to help leverage his or her strengths to manage an online doctoral program. For example, at institutions where attending residencies is a requirement, most students probably attend. However, a student must be engaged and take the initiative to network and seek out opportunities for a residency to fill the void created by lack of face-to-face interaction.

Research Question Two

How do MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA perceive and interpret their protective factors? Protective factors are external and internal factors that decrease the

negative impact of risk (Gore & Eckenrode, 1996). Poverty and PSA are the primary risk factors that the participants experienced. In order to fully understand how participants perceive their academic resilience, it is also necessary to have knowledge about the protective factors that reduced the risk of academic attrition in their lives. The participants' perception and interpretation of their protective factors are described in the following four themes: (a) resilience in adversity, (b) mindset about school, (c) transformational experiences, and (d) identity resilience.

Resilience in adversity. The ability to overcome the adversity in their lives was a protective factor that decreased the chances of them dropping out at any point in their academic journey. When asked how his background contributed to the continued persistence of school, Craig responded,

> You know, it has made me resilient, simply put. Um, everything that I went through, you know, we had to get through it. And, you had to pick up the boots and keep going…. it just kind of gave me the ability to just keep pushing.

Craig was resilient in that he did not give up after his father was murdered. Persevering through this traumatic experience meant that he could keep pushing through other difficulties.

Likewise, Denise and Mary both recalled situations they persevered through as minority first-generation college students. Mary recalled a period of homelessness:

> they told me I didn't have enough to cover room and board. I never told my mother. To this day she don't know. I had to live off campus, and I can remember living out of my car for maybe two, almost three months and got two jobs. I had a

> job at McDonald's and a job at the Laundromat. I was very resourceful, I was like, if I get a fast-food job, I don't have to worry about eating. If I can get a laundry, I have a place to wash my clothes. I didn't have to worry about taking a bath, cause I could go to campus. I could go right in, and they didn't know. So I would go and shower there, go to work, eat food, then I would work. In the evening, because I was on campus, I could still take advantage of the going to the cafeteria, go to eat….that was tough.

Denise recalled her experience a single mother during her undergraduate years:

> I settled for community college when actually I got accepted to various other universities but no one explained to me about financial aid and some of those components so I felt compelled to stay home. Doing that I ended up getting pregnant my first year in college. My mom was not very supportive at all but I still was determined to stay in school and so I did. I stayed in school full time and work part time. Refused to get on welfare, refused to get food stamps and yeah struggled with my son for several years before I finished community college. It took me a little bit longer about two and a half years. Then I went on to get my Bachelor's degree in Accounting.

Both Mary and Denise experienced financial hardships as young adults on their own. Their demonstrated resilience in the face of these adversities decreased the chances of them quitting when other threats to academic resilience arose.

Jessica, Tracy, and Marcus also demonstrated resilience in adversity related to poverty and PSA. Like the other participants, their resilience in adversity was a protective factor. When reflecting on both poverty and PSA, Jessica stated,

> it was a hard time you knowing that your parents were stuck like lights being turned off gas being turned off selling Christmas gifts selling items in the house or having a closet full of dirty clothes. Our house maintained was clean and all but there was times, like certain things my mom didn't do cause her addiction got the best of her... just not being able to really focus my energy on being a child sometimes…. I mean it was depressing, it was sad. Because I couldn't do anything, there was nothing that I could do…They never knew that I knew cause I would never say anything, but um, it was very depressing it was hard it was difficult to know that your parents….my thing was I hope that they don't die. You know I would hate for me to come home one day and my mom be dead.

Although Tracy did not know about her father's substance abuse as a child, she was fully aware of her family's financial hardship. She recalled,

> It was a struggle. It was a struggle. But I think that was the most challenging part as far as education is concerned. It's just being able to go. I went for the most part but there were some days that I just couldn't go 'cause I just don't have money to go to school.

When reflecting on how her background influenced the continued persistence of school, Tracy replied,

> I think my upbringing has made me a stronger person. . . . So, I look back on the things that I went through. And again, I think it makes me a stronger person. It made me want to work hard when I started having children, when I became a mother because I didn't want them to be exposed to the thing that I have been exposed to. I didn't want them to have to deal with, you know, rodents in the house or pest, you know, bugs in the house. And my kids have not had to deal with that. So it made me work harder to achieve more so my kids would have what I didn't have.

When reflecting on his experience of poverty, Marcus stated:

> I dealt with going without water 'cause we couldn't pay the water bill. I dealt with going without lights because my mom couldn't pay the light bill. Um I dealt with little food 'cause often what we had my mother gave it to her church members or to other needy families like we wasn't the needy family but that would be like the most difficult.

Mindset about school. Mindset about school is the final protective factor that emerged. Participants had a certain perspective about school and education that supported their academic resilience and decreased the likelihood that they would drop out of school at any point in their academic journeys. School was viewed as an outlet and a way to be different than one's family:

> ***Denise.*** I love learning, maybe it was if I think back emotionally it's probably was more of an escape…. I knew education was the key to get out of what I didn't

want to be which was my family. I already knew I would pursue education and to go as high as I could in that area.

Mary. To me, school was an outlet. Again, I knew I wasn't going back. I didn't want to be like my mother. I felt the only way I could get out was school.

Tracy. I got older and I started realizing how difficult life could be without an education. I've really, really started to embrace education, you know, and say, "Well, this is what I need to have." Because one thing I learned off from my mother, once you get your education, no one can take it from you.

Jessica. And also school was my out. I knew that once I graduated from high school, I didn't even think about college but it was just graduating from high school that I was ugh you know…I was gonna make something of myself….there was no way I was gonna allow myself to be sucked in to any of that stuff I wanted more I was gonna do better and it was also like an escape for me school was my escape how school is for people school is my escape even now that's why you know I went back for my Ph.D. is an escape.

All of the female participants perceived school as an outlet, a way to become something different than what they saw modeled in their own families, whereas the two male participants perceived school as a necessary part of life, a means to end:

Craig. I went because I had to go….it was like a means to an end. You know, you go to school and you get your high school diploma.

Marcus. I think going from, from high school to college I just thought was the natural order. Most people I guess tell their kids that you have to go to college

> after you graduate from high school you have to go to college, I was never told that, but I just always felt as though from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college, so I just went with the natural progression of school.

Transformational experiences. A thorough assessment of each participant's lived experience of academic resilience indicated that, at different moments of their lives, participants had experiences that were transformational. The following excerpts describe experiences that were transformational in that they changed the participants' perceptions of themselves, their pasts, presents, and futures, and because hope emerged as a result of these experiences. Therefore, the following excerpts will highlight the experiences that have reduced the possibility of academic attrition.

As the divergent case of the group, the origin of Marcus's protective factors was internal:

> It all goes back to again, uh in high school being told that you know you would never amount to nothing, matter fact my guidance counselor told me that I start off in junior college because she didn't think I should get to go to a 4 year university. So anytime someone tell me that I can't do something, it makes me want to prove them wrong.

In addition to the risk of poverty and PSA, Marcus also experienced the risk of teachers and counselors who did not believe in him. For other participants, school was an outlet and a place of affirmation, but Marcus skipped school and it was not a place that he could go to and be encouraged by teachers. However, he was driven to *prove them wrong* as a

result of their words. Marcus was motivated by their negativity and he was motivated long enough to gain an understanding of the value of education. Therefore, the negative encounters he had with teachers, and the positive experience of overcoming this added risk were transformational experiences.

Denise, Tracy, Mary, and Craig all recalled being exposed to different opportunities which produced hope and were therefore transformational experience. Denise recalls transformational experiences as a result of a long-term relationship with her kindergarten teacher:

> I had teacher, my first year, my kindergarten year who really took interest in me and we eventually moved by about 3rd grade and so we lost contact with her. Eventually right about 6th grade got connected back with her again and ended up becoming my Godmother, still in my life today. I think that really had a huge impact because it was a totally different lifestyle, something different. Yeah really come out of and be able to see a little bit more of what really the world had to offer other than what I was submerged in.

In addition to this long-term relationship, Denise had other transformational experiences that functioned as protective factors:

> I think along the way I did have a few individuals who really saw the potential in me that I didn't see. I did well up until about 9th grade when I say well I mean just average kid, I didn't study much, you did your homework and I probably was a B C student just by nature by not doing anything extra….Then, about 9th grade or so I think it was a counselor who was like "Oh I think you could upper bound you

> could benefit from that." Once I got an upper bound in 10th grade it really turned around. For me it was, you have to get good grades, we give stipends for you and you do well and that kind of thing. That motivated me then to study ... Then I got As and Bs and so after that I knew education was the key to get out of what I didn't want to be which was my family. I already knew I would pursue education and to go as high as I could in that area.

These transformational experiences reduced the chances of high school dropout and increased the chances that Denise would attend college. Also, these experiences contributed to the evolving realization of the value of education, which is a factor that contributed to Denise's academic resilience.

Tracy's transformational experience of being in the band at school was a protective factor because it made school fun:

> I was in the high school marching band. That was a lot of fun. I guess for me. Music came naturally for me. I just kind of gravitated to music because I was the -- young girl. I just always loved music. So, that was fun. Yeah, I guess in hindsight, it was easy. Dance was always easy for me. I was also in the high school dance company. And that was something that I enjoyed to do, really was good at it. And it was a lot of fun and it was easy for me. It was a lot you know, really easy. So, I guess being in the performing arts area, that was the easy part for me at school.

Additionally, exposure to the performing arts was transformational because that experience was the spark of a lifelong passion for Tracy, and has become the motivation for her to obtain a doctorate:

> I made a decision to start a doctoral program because number one the first reason is I want to one day have my own performing art school. I feel like so many areas within our country, they want to start these charter schools and want to start these performing art schools but they always start at the 9th grade level. And I'm a strong believer in education in the arts through the arts. So, I want to start at the kindergarten level. I want to catch these kids when they're young and really drop some seeds and plant some seeds in them when they're little and just watch that seed grow and blossom and flourish into this fine outstanding performing, I mean, dynamic singer or dynamite performer or dancer, that we had nurtured these kids since kindergarten. Here they are, singer in high school, you know? And I just always envision having a school of that nature of performing art school where we educate. Everything is at the academics. It's all geared toward performing arts. So, they can help the dancers do geometric shape to make, form different shapes on the stage. Everybody has an influence into what they're doing. And that the kids to actually see their academic is really working for them. And, I know, the only way for me to achieve that goal is to continue my education.

Mary's transformational experience came through realizing she was in poverty, her relationship with her basketball coach, her realization of the cause of her mother's beliefs, and attending a Black college:

> I didn't know I was poor. When I found out, not having a phone, and I didn't realize I was poor then. When I got my phone, we got a phone in the house, then I realized what everybody was missing, because I'd be able to just call my friends. I was like, wow. When we started driving, I realized I could go where I wanted to go. Like, wow. But when you don't have, you don't think about it. Maybe for me, when I think back I can remember eating cheese and sugar sandwiches. Back then, to me was a snack. When I reflect back, that's all we had. My mother, she never said we was poor, she acted as though we weren't poor.

The revelation of poverty was transformational for Mary because it helped her understand the value of education. Mary reported the only way out was to get an education. She needed to know that she was poor and that she did not have to repeat the cycle of poverty in her own life. Once she realized she was poor, she began to see the options in front of her. Therefore this transformational experience reduced her chances of academic failure.

> Because she didn't have a college education, she didn't know how to direct me to go to college. I was actually into sports. I played basketball, I played track. Our basketball coach had graduated from a college. The college that he had graduated from and his wife graduated from, they actually encouraged us to go to the same place. They helped get our paperwork together. Financial aid, I was on financial aid. They helped us get all that paperwork together, and that's how I ended up going to college.

Mary’s basketball coach was a mentor and a protective factor in her life, guiding her through the college process. This transformational experience was also a protective factor

because it also instilled the need to pave the way for others, which is a part of the academic resilience for each participant.

Another transformational experience for Mary was the revelation of the source of her mother's beliefs. Mary recalled a debate between her grandmother and great-aunt. Mary reported that her grandmother picked cotton and her great-aunt was intelligent. The great-aunt stated that Mary should be independent and find employment, and her grandmother believed she needed to find a man:

> That's when I started to notice, that's where my mother get that from. My mother left home to do better for herself, because my grandfather was an alcoholic, my mother got tired of picking cotton…. she moved to New York, she started living at the Job Corp, then went, she met my father, got pregnant, she ended up moving to Michigan and my Aunt took her in. That's when she started saying I want to do better for myself.

Mary, who stated she did not want to end up like her mother, finally understood her mother's struggles. Her mother, who picked cotton, desired to do better for herself and she did the best she could with what she had in spite of the context she grew up in. Mary's mother later learned a skilled trade and she was resilient. Now Mary had to focus her energy on doing the best she could with her life in spite of the context she grew up in.

Finally, Mary's decision to attend a Black college was transformational in that it helped her accept her identity; it also exposed her to other educated minorities:

> I wanted to go to an all-Black college so I could learn more about me. That was motivating because you saw some wonderful black speakers that came who were

> intelligent, educated, from PhDs, to celebrities. We would have Black History Month in this city, is nothing compared to Black History Month in one day.

Craig also recalled positive relationships with teachers from elementary to high school. He considers these teachers supportive, which suggests that they provided something extra that other teachers did not. These types of relationships provide a supportive network for students buffeting the impact of risk:

> There was one teacher, Mrs. Holder. And that particular teacher, she was very supportive and um she was real supportive. I had several supportive teachers. Mrs. Coleman was in elementary school and then, Mr. McCallister was middle school and Mrs. Holder was high school.

Jessica recalled a program she belonged to that helped keep her on track:

> It was called the Winner's Club, um, and it was for girls. It was a lady that one of my best friends' mom met and um and she it was almost like a performing arts type club but what we did was we put on performances around the city we did a couple of performances and it was really good for a way to boost our self-esteem to keep us out of trouble and I know we went from like middle school up until the 11th grade and then we kind of drifted off, but it kept us out of trouble.

Transformational relationships and experiences were protective factors that mitigated the risk associated with growing up in poverty and PSA by communicating to the participants, even as young students, that they had purpose and potential. These experiences were a source of meaning for the participants, reducing the impact of whatever negativity they might have picked up from their environments. Marcus's belief

in himself evolved through increased risk, which was transformational for him. He had to decide to either become what he was told he would be, or become something different; he chose to "prove them wrong."

Identity resilience. Identity resilience functioned as a protective factor for each participant, manifesting through different experiences and beliefs that shaped their view of themselves. In some instances, it was refusing to conform to the negative forces in the environment that had the potential to shape their identity. In others, it was exposure to positive forces that protected their view of self. Most participants had an unspoken question of *"who am I?"*

> ***Marcus.*** I think it made me who I am now. Again making me stronger dealing with all these, being ticked off not having the things normal kids have, um teachers telling me that I would never amount to anything or that I would never be nothing um, kind of made me who I am now, sort of like to prove them wrong.

Marcus stated that higher education was not endorsed in his home. When he was asked why he thought he was able to be so diligent in spite of education not being endorsed and teachers telling him he would not amount to anything, he replied,

> Most people I guess tell their kids that you have to go to college after you graduate from high school you have to go to college, I was never told that, but I just always felt as though from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college, so I just went with the natural progression of school.

Marcus was able to accomplish something that was neither modeled by anyone nor promoted in his environment. Although he made good grades, teachers told him he would not amount to anything, and, based on his report cards, his family did not push him towards higher education. Therefore, Marcus internally questioned – *who am I?* Should he believe what teachers said about him? Had Marcus allowed their perception of him to frame his view of himself, he may have ended up dropping out. It was this attack on his identity that caused him to become more aggressive in a way that led to him finding out that not only would he amount to something, but he would even end up going farther than most. He stated that he always believed in the "natural progression" of school. It is one thing to believe in it, but it's another to believe in your ability to accomplish it. Marcus refused to internalize the negativity, thereby demonstrating identity resilience.

Denise. Your family should be one of the first places to learn your identity and receive affirmation. However, the presence of PSA can hinder the ability of a family to meet this need for a developing adolescent. Denise questioned her identity more as she became more aware of PSA:

> I think in the earlier years I thought it was normal how I grew up, I didn't see any issues with my family life. Probably it wasn't until about middle school that I discovered that maybe this isn't as normal. Yeah, maybe having parents who are alcoholics…. I also saw my mom physically abused as a result of alcoholism. Her boyfriend at the time also was drinking and so I saw some of that type of abuse as well, physical abuse. It wasn't until I was probably 8th grade where I'm like I was

> embarrassed, didn't want to be around my father anymore. Didn't want to bring any kids home to see my family.

The more Denise became aware of what contributed to the current condition of her family, she became embarrassed, which implies that she was ashamed and did not want anyone to see what was really happening in her world. In spite of her parent's alcoholism, and in spite of having brothers who were caught up in delinquency, Denise remained academically resilient. Her ability to remain diligent in pursuing a better life in the midst of this context suggests that Denise had an internal question of, *who am I?* She did not conform to the view of self that would have developed as result of her environment.

Craig. Although Craig's father remained highly functional in his addiction, and his family was not as low income as some of the other participants, there is still evidence of Craig's questioning of *who am I?* Additionally, his father was a functional addict who was also involved in drug trafficking, which caused his unexpected death; this increased Marcus's overall risk and sense of identity:

> My self-esteem was low. And, I always felt like I was the outcast or didn't measure up to the other people. So, I think that would probably be the big piece for me, personally. Just not having a father, you know, that pushed me towards certain things and, yeah it hurt my self-esteem.

Craig reports the long-term implications of this experience and how he overcame it:

> Even today, I still have to work through. I really didn't really have a strong sense of self and who I was…. so the impact there is still far reaching that I have to stay grounded to remember that I am who I am not because of what I do but just

> because of who God has created me to be…. I try to use it as opportunities to help other people…how it impacts me now is basically is it serves as, as a vehicle to encourage other people, help them to move forward.

Where there were deficits in his immediate environment that could have led to a weakened view of the self, and in spite of his struggle with low self-esteem, Craig developed identity resilience through his belief that identity is God-given. Craig believed that if identity is God-given, then experiences and environment can help shape who you are, but they should not be able to stop you from who God has destined you to become. Therefore, his faith helped him develop identity resilience.

Jessica. Jessica expressed the impact of experiencing both poverty and PSA and how it affected her view of herself:

> Just not feeling as confident in myself as I you know as I as I would, you know. I'd probably say that's the biggest thing not feeling as confident in myself as you know even as I got older as they became sober.

Children look to their environment and their family for a reflection of what they are to become. However, Jessica did not see what she needed to see in her environment to affirm her inner drive. As result, Jessica had an inner question of *who am I?* She had an inner desire, but lived in an environment that sent contradictory messages about the self. Jessica had long-term lower self-confidence that extended beyond PSA. Like other participants, Jessica's identity resilience–the journey to discover and embrace her potential–was actualized through sharing her experience with others:

> Oh it's my testimony. So it's with me and I use it when I speak, when I go around and speak and talk with people, so it's definitely a testimony and it's encouraging to other people that, are going through and still did not do well that are going through and trying to figure out how to make it.

Mary. Mary's identity resilience was associated with her experience at a Black college. She was intentional about her decision to attend a Black college, which impeded the risk of environment on her identity. She reflected on life growing up in the projects:

> A lot of fights in the neighborhood. And a lot of fights in the playground. My mother had a best friend, which I call my Aunt, growing up all my life. She had a child that was about a year younger than me. So we grew up, and she'd fight all the time. We called each other cousins, and there were times where, we grew up where is you get into a fight, somebody else better, if you are losing one of those family members better jump in, you better not come home losing. I grew up as a fighter, my mother was a fighter. We got into a lot of trouble because a lot of times my cousin would get into a fight, and then I would have to turn around and help her fight….Growing up, I thought I was ugly. I thought I was not going to go too far. Both of my friends were high yellow, they were high yellow and I was real dark. They called me a lot darkie and big butt. That definitely bothered my identity.

Reflecting on what school meant to her, Mary stated:

> Everything. The biggest thing, it meant I wouldn't be like my mother. I loved her. I didn't want to be poor, after I realized I was poor. I never wanted to be in a verbally abusive relationship, knew that would never happen.

The question of who am I was generated from within Mary due to the negativity she experienced from growing up in the projects. Although Mary did not want to be like her mother, she said the following about her mother: "My mother was my rock." Her mother was a protective factor and a source of strength, but Mary could not look to her mother for a reflection of what she wanted to be. However, her experience at a Black college influenced her identity resilience:

> Took a different shift when I went to college, I started to join the track team. It was a different environment and I remember having a lady and her name was Loy. She was African, she was from Africa. She carried herself, she was so beautiful. She was dark. I think that did a whole shifting. They had a lot of money in her family, so she'd be wearing these beautiful headpieces with diamonds here. Her garment would be so beautiful. And she called me her best American friend, her best African friend…but that was a shifting for me, you know identity, and I think part of that too was, I chose to go to a Black college, an all-Black college on purpose. And I wanted to know more about my heritage, because I felt like, growing up the majority of my middle school and high school were predominantly White. So to me, I felt like I was always having to prove myself, because of my color….just that college atmosphere really helped me accept my identity and again gave me the perseverance,

Mary had a strong desire to know her identity. She stated in her interview that she does not think she would have made it had she had gone to a White institution. It was not that she could not make it, but the emergence of identity helped to protect her from the risks associated with poverty and PSA and promoted her academic resilience. Identity resilience emerges through different experiences and beliefs for each individual. Due to her experience of risk, she believed she needed the type of environment present at a Black college to better understand her identity.

Tracy. Tracy would be considered the discrepant case of the group for this protective factor. Her environment was unique from all the others in that she planned to go to college, but could not, due an unplanned pregnancy. Additionally, her mother successfully sheltered the children from the father's PSA. The father's mental illness also contributed to the children being less suspecting of his drug use. Therefore, Tracy was more aware of poverty than PSA. Her mother was open with the children concerning their financial situation and consistently motivated them to get their education in order to do better than she had done. As a result, Tracy received affirmation of what she was to become through the theme emerging from her parents' "do better than we did." This is confirmed through Tracy's report of how her environment affected her identity:

> I didn't let it have a great impact on me. A lot of people never really knew what we were going through in my home because I didn't, my mother always taught us you don't air your dirty laundry. So, we never talked about the things we had going on our home. We never brought it outside the home and always stayed in

> the house. That was our family business and that's the way it stayed. So I never talked about it…. I never let it affect my identity because I'm a strong believer and I grew up in a church. But my mother was strong in saying, "You know, God doesn't make mistakes and you're here for a reason. You're here for a purpose," you know. And you may not have what you want but you have what you need. You know, but we grew up in a spiritual home and I just never let that kind of stuff affect me to the point where I just felt like I was just going to lose my mind. No. I always believed that, you know, God, you're making a way. And He's still blessing us in spite of what I don't have. He still bless us…. I think my upbringing has made me a stronger person because again my strong mother, she said that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

Tracy's experience is an example of protective factors that exposed her to other protective factors. Her mother's experiences and beliefs, set in the context of almost attending college, made a difference compared to other participant's experiences. Therefore, Tracy's mother was also a source of Tracy's identity resilience.

Discrepant cases

Marcus is presented as a discrepant case to the extent that a lot of his academic resilience and protective factors are intrinsic, unlike the majority of the other participants. For example, all of the other five participants recalled at least one relationship or group they belonged to that provided positive and meaningful interaction with teachers or school staff. However, Marcus had teachers and counselors who told him he would not amount to anything, which drove him to want to prove them wrong. None of the other

participants disclosed this type of experience. In spite of this discrepancy, determination, the evolving realization of the value of education, the desire to pave the way for others, and leveraging strengths to manage an online doctoral program were still the key features of Marcus's academic resilience. Additionally, Marcus's protective factors were also the combination of transformational experiences, resilience, identity resilience, and perspectives.

Trustworthiness

Credibility was established by following rigorous procedures for data collection and data analysis. Each case was analyzed individually before moving to the next case. Codes were unique to each case with the exception of codes that described things like protective factors, being an online doctoral student, and PSA. It was not decided beforehand to use the same codes for these emergent themes. However, as each case was analyzed and emergent themes discovered, it was clear that the experiences, thoughts, and feelings that fit those categories would be best tracked using the same codes. A cross-case analysis was conducted using both Dedoose software and hard-copy data. The results of both analyses were compared and have been presented with this research. Member checking consisted of sending each participant a summary of their transcript with the major themes. Participants were asked if they believed the summary was an honest interpretation of their interviews. All of the participants replied that the summaries and themes were an accurate interpretation of their interviews.

Thick description has been used throughout this research to clearly communicate the participants' lived experiences and to ensure transferability. This includes using direct

quotes and minimizing paraphrased statements. Dependability was established by maintaining an audit trail that consists of six recorded interviews, six transcriptions, six files of emergent themes and codes, one file related to a deeper case-by-case analysis, one file of across-case themes, the interview guide, six demographic surveys, six summaries for member checking, one contact sheet, and the coded data in Dedoose.

Confirmability was established by disclosing the role of the researcher throughout the course of this study. The researcher's predispositions are exposed by interacting with the data in IPA (Smith et al., 2009). My prior experience with youth who have grown up in poverty and experienced PSA taught me that such youth have a negative attitude towards school. As I engaged with the data and the participants' "evolving realization of the value of education" emerged, I realized that I was predisposed to believe that some students in this situation do not understand the value of education. However, the data indicates it is an "evolving" process that does not happen instantaneously for everyone. In IPA, as the data triggers your preconceptions, they must be set aside in order for the true interpretation of the data to come forth.

Summary

This chapter has provided an interpretative phenomenological analysis of how the participants perceived their academic resilience and their protective factors. The experience of the protective factors contributed to the participants' academic resilience by lessening the impact of poverty, PSA, and the other numerous co-occurring risk factors present in participant's lives. Other risk factors participants experienced in their

environments included domestic violence, divorce, neglect, sibling juvenile delinquency, truancy, generational poverty, and unplanned pregnancy.

Participants perceive and interpret their academic resilience as: (a) determination, (b) evolving realization of the value of education, (c) paving the way for others, and (d) leveraging strengths to manage an online doctoral program. The participants have conviction about education and they are determined and driven to accomplish their goals. Participants perceive and interpret their academic resilience as a responsibility to their families and communities. Finally, in spite of the challenges associated with an online doctoral program, participants perceive and interpret their academic resilience as a continuation of a journey they began many years earlier. The participants experience success in the online doctoral program by drawing on the cumulative strength they developed as a result of graduating from high school, and completing undergraduate and graduate school in spite of it all. Each participant leverages their strengths, and they take responsibility for their academic success.

The participants perceive and interpret their protective factors as: (a) resilience in adversity, (b) mindset about school, (c) transformational experiences, and (d) identity resilience. These protective factors are perceived and interpreted as events and perceptions that led participants down a different path than some of the other individuals who lived in a similar context. Additionally, they are interpreted as experiences that made them more vulnerable to be influenced by the impact of school and education. Also, the four protective factors are interpreted as experiences that made them stronger as individuals and that provoked them to see their lives situated outside the context of

poverty and substance abuse. Ultimately, it was their perspective about these experiences that allowed the protective factors to have meaning.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the academic resilience of MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. A qualitative, interpretative, phenomenological analysis was conducted to gather and interpret the data from in-depth interviews conducted with six participants. I discovered four themes that explain how participants perceive and interpret their academic resilience. These four themes are as follows:

1. Determination.
2. Evolving realization of the value of education.
3. Paving the way for others.
4. Leveraging strengths to manage an online doctoral program.

In addition, there were four themes that explain how participants perceive and interpret their protective factors. These four themes are as follows:

1. Resilience in adversity.
2. Mindset about school.
3. Transformational experiences.
4. Identity resilience.

Heidegger (1962) maintained that a phenomenon is revealed through particular signs that are characteristic of the phenomenon itself. Academic resilience manifests through the eight aforementioned themes.

This chapter will provide an interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 4. Specifically, an interpretative explanation of how the results from this research fit into the existing body of knowledge about academic resilience. Next, I will discuss the limitations

of the study. Afterwards, I will present recommendations for future research and implications for social change. The chapter will close with a summation of this research project.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of the findings begins with a review of the conceptual framework used in this research. Kember (1995) developed a framework for understanding an adult learner's decision to continue or withdraw from an online program. Students with weak pre-entry characteristics are less likely to become socially and academically integrated, but more likely to attribute this to external situations and academic incompatibility. Social integration is a sense of belonging and connection to the community of faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, social integration refers to a student's ability to integrate the online agenda into his or her existing world. Kember asserted that when students are socially integrated, they are more likely to be academically integrated, which is persistence in meeting the academic challenges of the institution. However, family background, individual attributes, and pre-college learning can negatively impact a student's ability to become successfully socially and academically integrated (Kember, 1995). Minority first-generation students who have experienced poverty and multiple risk factors have many challenges to overcome in order to be academically resilient (Morales, 2010). However, I found that at-risk students are capable of overcoming obstacles, in spite of what may be considered weaker pre-entry characteristics.

Resilience in Adversity

The six participants in this study pressed through hardship and disadvantage to do what most people with their background cannot do. Although the students' experiences of cumulative risk had the potential to lead to weaker pre-entry characteristics and low educational attainment, resilience theory provides a framework for understanding how these students succeeded to a certain point. Researchers have indicated the impact of risk is reduced through exposure to intrinsic and extrinsic protective factors (Castro et al., 2011; Garmezy, 1991; Howell, 2011; Morales, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2010). Resilience in adversity is the foundational protective factor that reduced the impact of risk for low educational attainment. Moreover, the participants developed fortitude through enduring the long-term experiences of poverty and PSA. In addition to poverty and PSA exposure, the participants had to endure the consequences of poverty and PSA in their own lives, such as school disengagement, single parenthood, trauma, and homelessness. However, the participants reported that these experiences made them stronger. The experience of resilience in adversity was the beginning of the participants learning to remain focused in school while faced with things they could not control.

Determination

Fortitude in hardship became a transferrable skill, which is indicated by the theme of determination. The participants were faced with negative external factors that they could not control; over time, this pressure made them resilient against academic failure. The participants reported on multiple occasions that their experiences made them want to do better. It is common for students who live in poverty to be extrinsically motivated to

get out of poverty, because they do not want be poor (Castro et al., 2011; Morales, 2010). However, the desire to get out of poverty does not necessarily imply that an individual will have what it takes to begin a doctoral program. The remaining themes will explain how resilience in adversity and determination lead to academic resilience.

Mindset about School

Kember (1995) maintained that students who are most likely to withdraw from online programs have pre-entry characteristics shaped by risk and vulnerability and attribute their withdrawal to external situations and academic incompatibility. However, in spite of those same pre-entry characteristics, the participants of this study learned to overcome external situations and to set themselves on academic achievement. The experience of this perspective is described in the theme, mindset about school. Once their mindset was in the direction of achievement, the risk of low educational attainment was reduced. In their earlier years, school was perceived as an outlet and a means to an end. The participants viewed school as something mandatory that was necessary to attain the higher levels of education that would enable them to have a better life. Academic achievement is a protective factor that enables students to be resilient against risk in other areas (Shepherd et al., 2010; Wynn et al., 2011). The theme, mindset about school, describes how students developed the ability to perceive school differently and, as a result, how they could change their outcome in spite of their pre-entry characteristics.

Transformational Experiences

The next theme is related to the part of the conceptual framework that deals with human capital. Each of the participants described various experiences that were

transformational because they led to the emergence of higher aspirations. Examples include being demotivated by teachers, being supported by teachers, learning about generational poverty in their family, and being part of extracurricular activities that led to long-term achievements. This theme describes how important transformational experiences are as protective factors. At-risk students need exposure to positive things in their environment that will minimize risk and promote academic resilience. Also, the protective factor, mindset about school, made it possible for the participant who was unsupported by teachers to be resilient against demotivation. Therefore, intrinsic protective factors can potentially turn something that could be risk, into protection. The only thing standing between the demotivation of teachers and the participant's decision to not believe them was the participant's perception.

Minority first-generation students are more likely to have experiences that reduce human capital, such as neglect and attending poor schools (Gilchrist & Taylor, 2009; Legters & Balfanz, 2010). Additionally, socioeconomic status (SES) is transmitted to future generations through human capital (Carvalho, 2012). Human capital investment begins in the home (Mincer, 1981).Therefore, breaking the cycle of poverty and substance abuse includes increasing the investment of human capital for minority first-generation students. Furthermore, transformational experiences that build human capital can protect against the risk and vulnerability inherent in the pre-entry characteristics of many minority first-generation students (Campa, 2010; Palmer, 2011). Transformational experiences capture the life-changing events that were indicators of human capital investment.

Identity Resilience

As human capital investment through transformational experiences and ongoing academic perseverance occurred, identity resilience emerged. This theme captures the participants' experience of a transformational view of themselves. From the beginning, the participants had to determine whether they going to limit themselves to what their environment dictated they could be, or whether they could be what they believed they could be. Resilience in adversity was the foundational protective factor that increased determination. Ongoing determination led to persistence and the participants' ability to keep moving forward until they reached a level of achievement they believed they were meant to attain. Thus, as another transferrable skill, the participants realized they could also be resilient in resisting the pull toward mediocrity.

Mocetti (2012) asserted that students are more likely to drop out when their parents have low educational attainment. Additionally, research shows that, where there is PSA, there is more likely to be neglect, adolescent substance abuse, emotional dysregulation in children, and poor academic outcomes (Hall, 2010; Scheble et al., 2010; Vandsburger et al., 2008). Research has also shown that poverty negatively impacts the mental, emotional, and behavioral health of children (Yoshikawa et al., 2012).

A subtheme of identity resilience was the internal question, *who am I?* In spite of the cumulative risks associated with poverty and PSA, each participant sought to differentiate themselves from their environment because they wanted more. They were already in a cycle of resilience and engaged in a process of meaningful persistence to change their lives. Two of the participants—who have never met one another—used the

phrase “tighten the bootstraps.” This implies a refusal to quit, even in the most impossible situations. A perspective such as this does not develop overnight, but it is the ongoing experience of resilience that makes identity resilience possible.

Evolving Realization of the Value of Education

The theme, evolving realization of the value of education, explains the experience of the long-term consequences of determination and resilience. Each participant had their own reasons for remaining in school. Some of them reported a positive experience with school from the beginning, and others reported they did not like school at first. However, as time went on, their focus shifted from school to the value of education. This implies that they understood that attending school did not mean they would have an education. The participants reported that they believed education was not only the key to changing their lives economically, but it was also a means of personal fulfillment.

Transformational experiences and identity resilience contributed to their realization of the value of education. Their experiences motivated them to set higher goals. The longer they were engaged in the cycle of resilience, the more a new perspective on their identity emerged. A pivotal experience of their academic resilience was realizing that education was essential to helping them reach their higher aspirations. At this point, education became more than attending school; this explains their ability to engage in learning for more than good grades and course completion. This realization of the value of education was the turning point in their academic resilience and gateway to the final two higher dimensions of their academic resilience, which contributed to their decision to pursue an online doctoral degree.

Paving the Way for Others

Literature related to academic resilience has provided a conceptual framework for understanding how it was possible for the participants in this study to complete high school and attend college. Each of them were first-generation college students, therefore college alone was a great accomplishment. Ideally, getting a college degree would increase their chances of ending the cycle of poverty in their own lives. Perhaps even getting a master's degree might be considered necessary, depending on their professional field of interest. But the participants went further than this: all of them described a need to pursue their doctorates to help someone else. This characteristic of academic resilience led to the theme, paving the way for others. Their academic journey was no longer just about the participants, nor is it merely about not being poor, but it is about being a positive social change agent, about making a difference in individuals, communities, and systems. For instance, participants reported they were driven to improve their families and their communities, and they believed a doctorate would make them more influential to effect social change in their professions.

Their uncommon higher levels of academic resilience can be more clearly conceptualized through an understanding of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) as described in Self Determination Theory (SDT). Extrinsic motivation is characterized by varying degrees of self-regulation and engagement in pursuit of a goal. Intrinsic motivation is characteristic of self-determination and an internal locus of control. The authors further asserted that intrinsically motivated behavior is determination that originates from within the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The participants

moved from extrinsic motivation (pursuing education to get out of poverty) to intrinsic motivation (acquiring a doctorate to affect positive social change). Taken together, the concept of academic resilience and SDT provide a better framework for understanding the driving force behind the participants in this study. The next theme will further clarify this statement.

Leveraging Strengths to Succeed in an Online Doctoral Program

Each of the participants described their experience of academic resilience as leveraging their strengths to succeed in an online doctoral program. This theme includes: overcoming the challenges associated with an online program, such lack of structure; doctoral workload; family; technology; and the isolation of an online program. Kember (1995) asserted that social and academic integration are essential to a student's decision to continue or withdraw from an online program. Self-determination theory provides a lens to conceptualize the participants' experience of social and academic integration and their successful continuance in their doctoral programs.

Environments that provide autonomy help foster and increase intrinsic motivation as well as the higher levels of extrinsic motivation. Additionally, autonomy-supportive environments tend to lead to better academic achievement, particularly where there is a perception of connectivity and relatedness (Deci, 2006; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The experience of connectivity and relatedness for the participants in this study is the same as Kember's (1995) concepts of social and academic integration. Additionally, Liu (2009) reported a positive relationship between social belonging and academic achievement in online programs. Together these concepts refer to a sense of meaning and belonging in a

student who is self-determined and who does not require a controlling environment to perpetuate intrinsic motivation. Subsequently, the students have an internal locus of control, and they require the freedom and flexibility they currently have in an online program because it supports their academic and social integration. Kember (1995) maintained that students who are not able to adapt do not become socially and academically integrated; such students have an external attribution and an external locus of control. It is not necessarily the case that these students cannot do the academic work, but they cannot successfully manage in an online program. However, the participants in this study have moved from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation and they use the autonomy of the online doctoral program to their benefit.

Limitation of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis is to explore the academic resilience of MFOD who experience both poverty and PSA. Limitations of this study's design will be discussed in this section. The first limitation is potential recall error (Patton, 2002). Participants were required to reflect back to past events, so it is possible that participants might have selectively remembered events or forgotten important events altogether.

The second limitation of this study is that the questions about the pre-college experiences were too broad. Morales (2010) asserted that poor pre-college experiences, such as attending low quality schools and negative peer group influences, increase risk for academic underachievement. The depth of understanding of the participants' pre-college experiences would have been enriched by asking more detailed questions about

the following four factors: (a) quality of schools attended prior to college, (b) participants' perceived impact of negative peer group influences, (c) more detail about parental investment, and (d) inquiry about homework and study habits. Participants lived in different levels of poverty, so there may have been significant differences in the quality of the schools they attended. Additionally, when answering questions about school, one participant noted being bussed to schools outside of their communities for middle school. It is possible that other participants might have had this same experience, but did not discuss it since the question was broad.

The third limitation of this study is that there were no questions asked about the participants' perception of the quality of the college and graduate programs they attended. Although some participants discussed this when answering questions about school and being a minority first-generation student, specific questions might have provided more detail.

The fourth limitation of this study is that there was no inquiry into the participants' perception of establishing social presence in an online program or the quality of their current doctoral institution. Social presence in an online program reduces risk of attrition among online students (Liu et al., 2009). However, the questions asked focused more on their experience as a doctoral student and their perception of how their backgrounds influenced their continued persistence in school.

The fifth limitation of this study is that there was no inquiry about adolescent substance abuse, college substance use, and mental health history. These factors increase the risk of lower educational attainment. The broad question asked was, "what kind of kid

were you?" This enabled the participants to choose what they believed would be relevant. In short, the primary limitation of this study was the use of a more open-ended interview guide. More standardized questions would have made it possible for participants to cover certain topics when answering.

The sixth limitation of this study is the cultural background of the participants. This research was delimited to minority students, however only African-American participants could be located. Therefore, this study does not include the perspectives or experiences of other minority groups.

Recommendation for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of academic resilience in order to address the problem of a lack of targeted interventions for at-risk MFOD. However, the results of this study indicate that the foundation of academic resilience was laid in the participants' lives long prior to their doctoral journey. Consequently, by the time these participants had begun a doctoral program, they had surpassed academic resilience in that they went above and beyond what is necessary to be considered resilient. This study reveals that the problem is a lack of targeted interventions to mitigate the low educational attainment of minority students and address the cumulative risk associated with poverty and PSA for schools and families in impoverished communities. Therefore, the first recommendation for future research is an exploration of the experience of existing targeted interventions in the lives of at-risk minority students who are in the beginning stages of becoming academically resilient, to measure whether an intervention is in fact affecting the intrinsic change it purposes to promote. Researching

the experience of targeted interventions with students who are currently receiving an intervention, and who have completed an intervention in the past, would give insight into the effectiveness of both processes and outcome.

The sample for this study was delimited to between six to ten participants. Future research into the academic resilience of this population should include a larger sample and ask more detailed questions about precollege experiences. Future research should inquire about the quality of schools attended prior to college, parental investment, perception of negative peer influence, and homework and study habits, as these are associated with academic underachievement.

Another recommendation for future research is an examination of the academic resilience of minorities in higher education with a history of adolescent substance abuse and mental health problems. Parental substance abuse significantly increases the risk of adolescent use (CASA, 2013), as well as adolescent mental health disorders and lower educational attainment (Gance-Cleveland & Mays, 2008). Consequently, adolescent juvenile delinquency also tends to co-occur with adolescent substance abuse and mental health disorders (Phillips et al., 2009). Due to the prevalence of adolescent substance abuse and other co-occurring issues, research should inform interventions designed to promote the academic resilience of this population.

A better understanding of academic resilience requires knowledge of the presence of this phenomenon in spite of risk for higher risk populations. For instance, Marcus reported he was a truant student and stated that, initially, school did not mean anything to him. Craig reported attending school because he had to. All of the four African-American

women in the study identified school as a place of escape or meeting a need in their lives at the time. However, the two African-American male participants had no such connection to school. Future research should explore the academic resilience of African American and other minority male populations who have also overcome disengagement from school. Additionally, future research into the academic resilience of minority first-generation doctoral students should include Caucasians and diverse minority groups.

Although the participants in this study were from a lower socioeconomic background, parental substance abuse is not limited to those who live in poverty, and students from wealthy families can also become disengaged from school. Another recommendation for future research is an examination of the academic resilience of doctoral students from affluent families exposed to PSA. A comparison of the process of academic resilience between individuals from wealthy and impoverished backgrounds would provide a broader understanding of both academic resilience and protective factors. In addition, this research would provide knowledge about how SES influences the experience of PSA.

The results of this study indicate that identity resilience for the six participants in this study was the process of being resilient against the impoverished identity in spite of living in poverty. Future research is needed to explore the role of identity resilience in the process of socioeconomic mobility for minority at-risk students in higher education.

Implication for Social Change

A search through the literature reveals that poverty is a comprehensive social problem that reaches into every socioeconomic group. Poverty not only impacts the poor,

but it also impacts people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. Based on the literature included in this research, the consequences of both poverty and parental substance abuse is a lower quality life (Duncan et al., 2010; Enoch, 2011; National Center for Health Statistics, 2011; Oshio et al., 2010; Ostler et al., 2010). Therefore, anything that can impact the ability to reduce poverty and parental substance abuse is a step towards positive social change. What follows is an explanation of recommendations for social change, based on the four themes that represent the participant's experience of protective factors: (a) resilience in adversity, (b) mindset about school, (c) transformational experiences, and (d) identity resilience.

Social Change at the Policy Level

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), has provisions to improve the achievement of minorities and low-income students who attend high-poverty schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). In order to prevent children from being left behind, there is a need to increase support to their families. Also, middle and high school students who attend high-poverty schools, more than likely attended high-poverty elementary schools. Therefore, to increase the impact of this policy in low-income communities and high-poverty schools, it should call for tailored reformation at the family level. Improving families will improve communities, thereby impacting the social environment that students live in. As the identity resilience theme indicates, students' view of the self is shaped by their family and community. The six African-American participants in this study demonstrated

resilience in this area, and they successfully overcame their impoverished identities. What follows is a detailed description of how this policy change might look in practice.

Multidimensional role of school. School represented a coping mechanism for several of the participants in this study. Therefore, school should be more than a place to learn for some students. Realistically, teachers and other school staff in high-poverty schools are limited in what they can do to help students. Successful programs that service high-poverty communities utilize high quality and sufficient quantity of evidence-based practices based on the targeted community's needs (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010). There is need for policies targeting high-poverty communities with high drop-out rates. Any communities with high drop-out rates should have services for students and families beginning at the Head Start level. Services may vary depending on the needs of the community. However, some services would be the same across communities.

Aggressive High School Retention. The results of this research reveal that previous academic success contributes to academic resilience. However, students must be determined in order to overcome academic challenges and remain engaged in school. Aggressive high school retention should begin long before students enter high school, by working with families when their children are young. Beginning at the Head Start level, parents would be provided with supportive teaching and services to help them through the elementary years, as needed. In addition, the development of appealing academic after-school and summer programming for at-risk students would help address early childhood barriers to learning.

The participants in this study became more aware of their environment and their identity as they became adolescents. Therefore, beginning at the middle school level there is need to develop strategic roadblocks to lower educational attainment. Roadblocks would include preventative services related to the academic, social, and developmental needs of students. These services would be designed to promote identity resilience, and would bridge students into high school. More specific examples of services to be provided include educating parents on the implications of low parental investment, teaching parents how to help their children with homework, and teaching study skills. Services for the students themselves would provide opportunities for them to engage in activities and programs that are focused on building self-esteem and on overcoming the negative messages adolescents receive from their environments that could potentially shape their identity.

High school services would include partnering high-risk students with college-educated mentors who would be assigned to them for as long as they remain a student in the district. Mentors would help to familiarize students and families with the process for attending college or trade school, as well as preparation for college entrance exams. The roadblocks to lower educational attainment offered in middle school would be provided on a deeper level in high school. Students and families would receive tutoring help, and parents would be held accountable for being a part of their children's education. In addition to academic services, each school should have prevention services that provide appealing programming to students focusing on truancy, teen pregnancy, and adolescent substance abuse prevention. This programming could be done a partnership with a

comprehensive human services organization that would function as the "arms" of the school, extending into the home. Therefore, this aggressive high school retention model would include quickly addressing a student's academic problems and delinquent behavior with the family before it spirals out of control.

Substance Abuse Prevention. Families using the services of the comprehensive human services program would be screened for substance abuse concerns. Additionally, substance abuse prevention and education should routinely be provided to students and families. The purpose of this is to increase awareness and familiarize the families with the services provided within the comprehensive human services organization. Substance abuse services would be provided to needy students and families. Prevention and intervention services should be provided at the college level to at-risk students. Adult children who have experienced PSA are at a greater risk for drop out than students who have not experienced PSA (Hall, 2010).

Conclusion

In this research, I explored the lived experiences of six academically resilient MFOD who experienced poverty and PSA. An analysis of the risk factors the participants overcame indicates that they were more than competent. Researchers on resilience theory explained that competency is adapting to normal changes (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). However, the participants in this study were resilient in spite of the cumulative risk factors present in their environments that made them vulnerable for academic underachievement. The findings of this study indicate that their resistance to caving under the dysfunction in their environment developed their determination. Subsequently,

they developed a positive mindset about school and an evolving realization of the value of education. Based on this, participants perceived certain experiences as transformational and they desired to help pave the way for others. Throughout this journey, participants resisted the pull to succumb to poverty and they were identity resilient. The participants eventually developed the ability to perceive themselves not as impoverished children of substance abusers, but as scholars and practitioners. These six participants have gained the capacity to leverage their strengths to be successful in an online doctoral program. The harsh and dysfunctional environments the participants grew up in provided multiple opportunities for them to quit and to attribute their failure to external circumstances. However, each milestone of academic achievement strengthened their internal locus of control. In conclusion, academic resilience at the doctoral level is the result of the enduring academic resilience experienced by the participants during other critical periods of life.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

Dear Ms. Boatman,

This email is to serve as your notification that Walden University has approved BOTH your dissertation proposal and your application to the Institutional Review Board. As such, you are approved by Walden University to conduct research.

Please contact the Office of Student Research Administration at research@waldenu.edu if you have any questions.

Congratulations!

Jenny Sherer

Associate Director, Office of Research Ethics and Compliance

Leilani Endicott

IRB Chair, Walden University

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Wedgwood Christian Services – Grand Rapids, MI
Clinician
Individual and group therapy
Substance abuse and mental health
2013 – Present

Pine Rest – Grand Rapids, MI
Clinical Specialist, Caring Communities
Community grant-funded juvenile diversion program
Curriculum development
Group and individual therapy
2011-2012

Department of Human Services – Grand Rapids, MI
Children Protective Services, Intake Specialist
Initiate children protective services investigations
2011

Bethany Christian Services – Grand Rapids, MI
Outpatient Therapist
Individual counseling with adults, children, and families
2009-2011

Project Rehab, Recovery Campus – Grand Rapids, MI
Treatment Specialist
Organized and developed group therapy sessions for adult treatment program
2009

DTE Energy, Customer Contact Specialist – Kentwood, MI
Customer Contact Specialist
Customer service for residential and commercial internet customers
1998-2008

VOLUNTEER WORK

Girls Growing II Women, Inc.
Board Member
2014 – present

Kingdom Life Ministries – Grand Rapids, MI
Deborah Project
Counseling
2014 - present

Hispanic Center of West Michigan – Grand Rapids, MI
Sol Program, Assistant Group Facilitator
Facilitated drama therapy group for Hispanic gang members
2008

EDUCATION

Walden University
Doctor of Philosophy in Human Services
Concentration: Social Policy Analysis and Planning
2010-2014

University of Phoenix
Master of Science in Counseling, Mental Health
Oct 2006 to Feb 2009

Grand Valley State University
Bachelor of Science in Sociology
Aug 1991 to Dec 1995

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE

LPC 6401011350
NCC 246435

HONOR SOCIETY

Tau Upsilon Alpha NOHS honor society

AWARDS

University of Phoenix 2008 Outstanding Graduate Student