

Poverty and the Role Educators Play in Building Resilience

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We hereby certify that this Dissertation, submitted by Vicki J. Londer, conforms to acceptable standards and fully fulfills the Dissertation requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education from College of Saint Mary.

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Vicki Jo Londer

## Dedication Page

This is dedicated to my parents, Paul and Jody Londer. There is no way to express my gratitude for your never-ending love and support. When I started this program, you simply said “go for it, we know you can do it.” You never once second-guessed my choice. You were always so sure of my success. There were many days I wanted to quit, but you were there to encourage me to move forward. You never once let me doubt my abilities or myself. Through the tears, frustration, and self-criticism you were always there. You listened, offered advice, and reassurance: the three things I needed most. I would not have been able to do this without you. You are my biggest fans and I am blessed to have you as my parents. Thank you for just being you.

This is also dedicated to all those high school students who struggle. Please know that you can make it and there are people in your schools that will help you. The greatest joy in my career is watching students overcome adversity in their lives. Their ability to be resilient in the face of great tragedy inspires me. Many times students deal with events in their lives that would give them an excuse to go off track, but they don't. They dig deep within and with some help from the adults around them, come through to the other side. You are the reason I do what I do. My favorite quote is: “I may not be where I want to be or where I thought I would be, but I am clearly where I am supposed to be.” When I get to help a student through difficulty to something greater, I know I am right where I belong.

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### Abstract

Educators play a vital role in the ability for students living in poverty to build resilience. There are many reasons for these at-risk students not to achieve at the same high levels as their peers of higher socio-economic status. However, with support, encouragement, and healthy positive relationships with the educators in their lives, they can reach their goals. The researcher explored the specific characteristics and practices of educators that helped students living in poverty to build resilience. This study design consisted of an online survey, face-to-face interviews, and a card sort activity. Five young women who lived in poverty during high school provided insight into the role educators played in their ability to build resilience. The views provided by these young women present a framework for exploring the characteristics and practices of educators that aided in their ability to build resilience despite the adversity in their lives.

## Chapter One: Problem statement, purpose, and significances

### **Problem Statement**

The increase in the number of students living in poverty in recent years has major implications in the lives of young people. For students living in poverty, achieving positive outcomes can be difficult. In looking at young adults who have been tested by negative events in their lives, resilience has been the factor that has allowed them to continue to strive and positively adapt to such stressors (Garmezy, 1991).

From 1967 to 2010, the number of children living in poverty in the United States increased by 23.2 percent (Children's Defense Fund (CDF), 2012). These children start school at a disadvantage compared to their peers in the middle and high socioeconomic statuses (Chin & Newman, 2003). According to Ruby Payne (1996), in order for these children to obtain success and achieve at high levels, one element they must have is a support system. Payne (1996) defines support systems as the friends, family, and backup resources that an individual can access in times of need. When examining these supports individually, they include: coping strategies, options during problem-solving, information and know-how, temporary relief from emotional, mental, financial, and/or time constraints, connections to other people and resources, positive self-talk, and procedural self-talk (Payne, 1996). Despite living in adverse situations, such as poverty, nearly 70% of youth living through adversity overcome their situations and achieve positive outcomes (Werner & Smith, 2001).

Many students succeed simply because they are able to be resilient (Masten, 2001). Resiliency can be built from protective factors such as environmental (external supports) and internal attributes. External supports can include family, peers, school, and community. These relationships can either protect or intensify the negative impact of stress on a child's life

(Kumpfer, 1999). Internal factors are a child's personal attributes and qualities (Boman & Russo, 2007). These attributes are intrinsic, inherent, or generated from within. These can include a child's health, temperament, autonomy, and intellectual capacity (Benard, 1995). Several protective factors, environmental (external supports) and internal attributes, are involved in the process of helping a child in poverty build resilience. Educators are one source of external support that plays a vital role in the development of resilience in children living through adversity, such as poverty.

Educators are seen as a resource in a student's environment. When there is a dynamic interaction between the two, an interruption down a negative path and support towards success can happen (Luthar, Ciccheit, & Becker, 2000). This is not a result of an individual trait or a single intervention, but a culmination of a child's internal attributes and multiple interventions of external supports (Franklin, 2000). Students, who are able to be successful in school despite living in poverty, are apt to have at least one educator who believes in them and serves as a supportive adult and role model in their lives (Borman & Overman, 2004; Werner, 1990). Children with adversity in their lives need educators who they respect and trust in order to form meaningful connections with them (Brooks, 2006; Johnson, 1997). This relationship contributes most to the success of students dealing with adversity and helps them build resilience (Benard, 2004). It is a problem that most teacher education programs focus on curriculum delivery and not on the development of the core skills and dispositions that are essential for educators to learn in order for them to help children in poverty build resilience. Along with learning pedagogical skills and dispositions, educators also need to learn how to create supportive learning environments to help children in poverty build resilience (CARE, 2013).

Living in poverty is an adverse situation that can have a negative impact on children's lives and the number of children in poverty continues to grow. One way to diminish the effect of living in poverty is for children to build resilience. Resilience is not something a child is born with or not born with, but can be built over time. Educators are one source of external support that can reinforce the internal attributes children in poverty possess to help them build resilience. Utilizing the external supports available to them, such as educators, and the internal attributes they already possess, children are able to build resilience despite the adversity they live in.

### **Significance of the Study**

#### **Poverty**

Many families with children in today's economic state, face reduced circumstances. The 2008 economic crisis became a "household crisis" due to increasing costs for basic goods, fewer jobs with low wages, diminished assets, less access to credit, and reduced access to public goods and services (The Whole Child, 2013). All of these factors affected families. These families tried to cope with this urgent situation by spending less money on education and health care and in some circumstances, pulling their children out of school to work to help support the family (The Whole Child, 2013).

The situation remains grim due to the number of children living in poverty continuing to rise. According to the 2012 Children's Defense Fund statistics released in 2012, the official poverty line for a family of four is \$23,021 per year. Since the year 2000, the child poverty rate has increased by 35 percent. The poverty rate for young families with children under the age of five in the year 2011 was 25.1 percent, which is a staggering 5 million children (CDF, 2012). Other statistics from the CDF (2012) report states that 16.1 million poor children are currently living in the United States. Among these children, 7.2 million are living in extreme poverty.

Unfortunately, being the least able to do anything about their circumstances and being the most affected by them are these “poor kids” (The Whole Child, 2013).

Children in poverty are very dependent on the supports available to them in their communities and schools. School districts are now dealing with high rates of parental unemployment/underemployment and more transient families (The Whole Child, 2013). These factors result in less tax revenue, which affects the amount of funds that can be spent on supporting students in poverty. These children come to school hungry, stressed, and unable to concentrate. Poverty is linked to children completing fewer years of school and earning lower wages as adults (The Whole Child, 2013). To help students living in poverty to be more successful in school and help close the achievement gap between children living in poverty and those who are not, teachers need to be aware of the differences in their lives (Payne, 1996). The number of children living in poverty continues to grow. In order for these children to become successful adults, they must build resilience to help them survive adversity, such as living in poverty.

### **Resilience**

Unfortunately, students are very aware of what adversity is at some point in their lives. This is why it is important that educators understand the factors included in building resilience in order to help students overcome adversity. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009), 59.4% of adults surveyed stated they had experienced at least one of eight “adverse childhood experiences.” This was out of the 29,212 adults surveyed. Of these 17,351, 29.1% grew up with a substance abuser in the home, 26.6% had parents that either separated or divorced, and 16.3% witnessed domestic violence growing up. While the adults surveyed



suffered from adversity in their lives, they were able to build resilience and propel forward in their lives.

Resilient students were able to successfully adapt and adjust rapidly to major life events (Werner, 1990). Gaining understanding in resilience is a complicated task however. The difficulty lies in the fact that resiliency is not a concept that, once achieved, is always present (Werner, 1990). Resilience cannot be viewed as a fixed attribute that children either do or do not possess according to Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994). Dryden, Johnson, and Howard (1999) and Rutter (1987) state that at different points in children's lives, they may be more or less resilient. This can depend on the interaction between the increase of individual and environmental factors over time.

An assortment of protective factors has been identified in order to help reduce the affect of adverse situations on students and helps build their resilience (Boman & Russo, 2007). These factors include both attributes of the students themselves (internal attributes) and their environments (external supports). One internal protective factor that helps foster resilience is flexibility. Flexible children that can adjust to change are better able to positive cope with situations. Having a sense of self-worth is also a very important internal protective factor. Possessing life skills such as good decision-making, assertiveness, and impulse control are also vital internal protective factors that help children build resilience (Henderson, 2013).

These factors are seen to promote successful development and are acquired through a student's exchanges that include family, friends, their community, and institutions such as schools (Rutter, 1987, 2002). Generally, these protective factors permit students to become more resilient and less vulnerable. The potential benefit to educators in gaining understanding of what protective factors resilient children utilize and possess may greatly benefit students in poverty.

**Educators**

Henderson (2013), stated that educators can help strengthen a student's internal attributes and environmental (external) protective factors. By doing so, these protective factors can propel the student forward into academic and life success. These factors can help a student buffer, improve, and alleviate the effects of risk and stress (O'Dougherty Wright, Masten, & Narayan, 2013). Educators are able to help students build resilience for many reasons. One reason is that educators can notice and reinforce students' internal protective factors (internal attributes) such as their temperament, self-esteem, and good reasoning skills (Benard, 2007). This can be accomplished through conversations with students and helping them to be aware and cultivate these traits. Secondly, educators can create a school culture that is full of environmental protective factors (external supports), such as caring adults (Henderson, 2013).

Educators can naturally help support students in building their internal and environmental protective factors (Henderson, 2013). Asking students how they are doing and providing students with opportunities to express their individuality, allows the students to believe they are valuable and capable despite any adverse situations they may be living in, such as poverty. While educators cannot remove the adversity from a student's life and may get discouraged, they can help the student build resilience that will help them achieve success (Henderson, 2013).

In a study conducted by Werner and Smith (1992), 505 Hawaiian children born in 1955 were examined. This study found that although the participants had experienced adversity, such as poverty, they had developed into confident, competent adults. The researchers concluded that protective factors were more powerful in the lives of the children than were the stressful life events they faced (Werner & Smith, 1992). The researchers also found the most common source of the children's environmental protective factors were their teachers and the caring, supportive

relationships they had (Werner & Smith, 1992). Educators can help children foster their protective factors, environmental (external) supports and internal attributes, in order to help them through the process of developing resiliency in the face of adversity.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. First, it described the possible characteristics and practices of educators identified by students at two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city. The characteristics and practices of educators helped these students living in poverty while in high school build resilience. This information was gathered with the use of an adapted version of the California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd, 2013) (Appendix A). This phase of the study used a questionnaire that utilized a Likert scale to gather data. The second phase of this mixed-methods study explored more deeply the role educators played in the development of resilience in students living in poverty during high school. These students were from two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city. Face-to-face interviews (Appendix B) and a card sort activity (Appendix C) were used to gather information in this phase. The online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity were used to collect data to answer the research questions for this study.

### **Research Question**

The question guiding this research study was as follows:

What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience?

**Limitations**

Limitations of a study are factors over which the researcher has no control (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The researcher had little to no control over the number of participants that agreed to volunteer for this study. Due to the small/unique sample for this study, results may not be generalizable beyond the specific population from which the sample was drawn. This study was limited to students, from two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city, that qualified for free/reduced lunch while they were in high school. The results of this study are unique to the institutions of higher education included and may not be applicable in other situations, such as larger universities, in other areas of the country. The usefulness of the findings to stakeholders is also a limitation to this study.

Additionally, a limitation to this study included the bias of the researcher. Bias in research is defined as any influence, condition, or set of conditions that alone or in any combination can distort the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Acknowledgement of any biases and an explanation of measures taken to avoid these biases by the researcher were noted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Another limitation of this study was the self-reported data. This type of data can rarely be independently verified and may be selective, telescoping, or exaggerating in nature (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Finally, how individuals view and experience resilience may be influenced by their gender, age, cultural practices, and/or beliefs.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations refer to what the researcher can control in a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This study was delimited to the examination of students' perspectives on resilience. This study was also delimited to students who attended two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city and who indicated that they qualified for free/reduced lunch while attending

high school. Finally, the researcher obtained data outside the scope of this research project during the process of collecting data. Therefore, the scope of this research project intrinsically became a delimitation within this study.

### **Assumptions**

One major assumption of this study was that participants were honest in their responses. This is particularly important when referring to the sensitive nature of the question asking about the study participants' free/reduced lunch status while they were in high school. Along with this assumption, the researcher assumed the study participants viewed "living in poverty" as an adverse event in their lives. A third assumption was that the study participants had a general understanding of the term "resilience."

Another assumption of this study was that the instrument used to measure resiliency is valid and reliable for college students as opposed to its intended population, seventh through twelfth grade students. One last assumption came before the research was conducted. It was assumed that the size of the sample was sufficient to detect any significant findings if they existed in the population.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following list provides definitions of key terminology used within this research study:

**Adversity:** Adversity was defined by Merriam-webster.com (2013) as a "state, condition, or instance of serious or continued difficulty."

**Poverty:** "The extent to which an individual does without resources" (Payne, 1996). When referring to financial poverty, federal guidelines list the poverty guideline for the state of Nebraska at \$22,350/annually (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). For

purposes of this study, students that identified as qualifying for free/reduced lunch in high school will be considered currently “living in poverty.”

**Free/reduced lunch:** As per federal guidelines, for a student to qualify for free lunch at school, a family of four must earn less than \$28,665/annually. For a student to qualify for reduced lunch at school, a family of four must earn less than \$40,793/annually (Nebraska Department of Education, 2013).

**Resilience:** The tendency to rebound, spring back or having the power to recover. Attributes that seem to correlate with children that were able to adapt to stressful situations include: personal internal attributes, familial supports, and societal supports (Garmezy, 1991).

**Protective Factors:** The environmental (external supports) and internal attributes needed to build resilience in children (Henderson, 2013).

**Environmental (external supports) factors includes:** educators, churches, government institutions, mentors, family members, and community (Garmezy, 1991).

**Internal attributes:** temperament, self-esteem, flexibility, having a sense of worth, and possessing impulse control (Henderson, 2013). Having hope is also an internal attribute (Witter, 2013; Masten, 2001).

### **Summary**

There has been an increase in the number of students attending school with issues that require special support (Christiansen, Christiansen, & Howard, 1997). Poverty is one of the adverse situations students have to deal with while in school. Children living in poverty are at an increased risk of negative life events such as poor health, poor school attendance, or low achievement (Danziger & Stern, 1990). Building resilience is one way students living in adversity, such as poverty, can achieve as high as those students that do not live in poverty.

Through protective factors, such as, external supports and internal attributes, students living in poverty can build resilience to help them through the adverse situations in their lives.

Educators play a fundamental role in the ability of children experiencing adversity, such as poverty, to build resilience. Classrooms that are steeped with positive interactions and instructional strategies that foster resilience are imperative for students living with adversity (Downey, 2008). Educators can help children in poverty build self-esteem by helping them recognize and value their unique abilities, strengths, and personal achievements. Building resilience can help children living in poverty defy the negative odds against them (Downey, 2008).

Through the use of an adapted version of the California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd, 2013), face-to-face interviews, and a card sort activity, this research study answered the central research question: What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty build resilience?

## Chapter Two: Literature review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this review of literature was to look at poverty and the effect living in poverty has on students. Further, the purpose of the review of literature was to also look at prior research completed in the area of educators and the role they play in helping a child living in poverty build resilience. The review of literature covered research from 1972 through 2015. Electronic databases such as EBSCOhost, ERIC, and ProQuest were used to conduct the search. Only peer-reviewed research articles were included in this review of literature.

This research is important due to the ever-increasing number of children living in poverty. From 1967 to 2010, the number of children living in poverty increased by 23.2% (Children's Defense Fund (CDF), 2012). These children start school at a disadvantage compared to their peers in the middle and upper classes (Chin & Newman, 2003). Many of these students succeed simply because they are able to be resilient (Masten, 2001). The relationship between children living in poverty and the role educators in play in helping them build resilience is significant.

### **Poverty**

The number of children living in poverty continues to rise. From 1967 to 2010, the poverty rate for young families with children went from 14.1% to 37.3%. Statistics from the CDF (2012) report states that 16.4 million poor children are currently living in the United States. Among these children, 7.4 million are living in extreme poverty. The CDF (2012) defines extreme poverty as a family of four having a yearly household income of less than \$11,025. The official poverty line for a family of four is \$22,050 per year.



There are various terms used to define different types of poverty. According to Cuthrell, Ledford, and Stapleton (2009), one type of poverty is situational poverty. This is caused by specific circumstances such as illness or loss of a job that one incurs. This generally lasts a very short period of time. Generational poverty is a cycle of poverty that is ongoing. This type of poverty usually includes two or more generations of families experiencing limited resources. Having its own culture with hidden rules and belief systems is a part of generational poverty. Lastly, absolute poverty focuses on provisions and the bare essentials needed for living. There are no extra resources for social and cultural expenditures within this type of poverty (Cuthrell, Ledford, & Stapleton, 2009).

Ruby Payne (1996) defines poverty as more than just a person lacking in financial resources. The theoretical definition created by Ruby Payne (1996), defined poverty this way; “the extent to which an individual does without resources” (p. 7). These resources include not only financial but also emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models and knowledge of hidden rules. According to Payne (1996), the ability to move out of poverty depends more on these other factors than it does on finances.

In her theoretical framework, Payne (1996) defines each of these resources in great detail. A person living in poverty that has emotional resources has the stamina to tolerate any difficult and uncomfortable situations and/or feelings they may have. These emotional resources are very important for they allow the individual to not have to return to old patterns of behavior. Simply having the capability to process information and use it in daily life are mental resources. In order to not see themselves as hopeless or useless is having spiritual resources. In order for a person to be self-sufficient, they must have physical resources (Payne, 1996).

Having a support system is another resource Payne (1996) describes. This resource will be addressed specifically in this study under the category of external supports. These are the people in one's life that help when needed. A support system helps individuals meet their emotional needs, financial needs and offers knowledge as well. Role models teach people how to live life emotionally. Lastly, Payne (1996) refers to the idea of knowledge of hidden rules. These rules exist in poverty, middle class, and upper class groups of people. These are the rules about the significant unspoken understandings within a class. These rules cue members of a group that a person does or does not fit. For example, one hidden rule in poverty is that one of the main values that an individual has to the group is the ability to entertain (Payne, 1996).

Ruby Payne's (1996) work in the idea of "hidden rules among classes" has an impact on how children in poverty are seen by their teachers. These rules are unspoken cues and habits of a group (Payne, 1996). These hidden rules have a large impact on student's achievement in schools and govern so much of a teacher's assessment of students and their capabilities. An assumption made about students' intelligence and approach to school may relate more to their understanding or lack of understanding of hidden rules. For example, for a student living in poverty, education is valued and revered in the abstract, not seen as a reality (Payne, 1996). Their language is casual in nature and is about survival. For those living in the middle class, education is seen as crucial for making money and being successful. Their language is in the formal register and is all about negotiation (Payne, 1996).

To help students living in poverty be more successful in school and help close the achievement gap between children living in poverty and those who do not, teachers need to be aware of these differences (Payne, 1996). These differences are becoming more apparent in schools due to the recent shift of where poverty is concentrated in neighborhoods. No longer is

poverty a problem of only big cities. People living in poverty are in every neighborhood of every area of the country (Freeman, 2010).

Poverty was once seen as an “urban” problem but the current trend is that people living in poverty are moving from urban areas and into the suburbs. The resettlement of low-socioeconomic families into the suburbs has happened gradually and is unlikely to change in the near future (Freeman, 2010). The federal government has kept track of income and poverty distribution for several years. For the first time since this data was collected, a larger number of American families living in poverty are living in the suburbs as compared to cities. According to the Brookings Institution (Berube & Kneebone, 2006) about 1.3 million American families in poverty are living in the suburbs. Data from 2005 showed that the number of people living in poverty in suburban areas amounted to 53% of the entire group of metropolitan poor. Even though city residents are more apt to live below the poverty line as compared to those living in the suburbs at a rate of 18.8% to 9.4%, the rate at which people living in poverty are moving to the suburbs is outpacing those moving to cities (Berube & Kneebone, 2006).

People from low-socioeconomic backgrounds are drawn to the suburbs for many reasons. One reason is the opportunity for lower-cost housing. There are also more low-wage jobs and jobs that require lower skill levels in suburban areas. Examples of these types of jobs include: restaurants, lawn care, home and office cleaning, and hospitality trades. Many of these types of businesses have moved outside of the urban areas and are plentiful in the suburbs (Freeman, 2010). The range of poor Americans living in the suburbs changes the view that poverty was primarily limited to urban areas.

When focusing on the larger picture, it is important to anticipate the way schools will be affected by this demographic shift. When people of low-socioeconomic status and people of

middle and upper socioeconomic statuses live in the same neighborhoods, seeing what is actually going on in schools is easily missed (Freeman, 2010). Poverty in suburban areas sometimes is unrecognizable. When children living in poverty attend the same schools as children of privilege, poverty has a tendency to appear more subtle, controllable, and less devastating (Freeman, 2010).

At first, established communities located close to the urban core did not see an influx of people living in poverty. Instead, economic distress, stagnant wages, and job losses drove individuals and families to migrate across invisible divides into the regions of the middle and affluent classes. People of lower economic means once considered these types of areas impassable (Freeman, 2010). Place in society is so important in shaping a person's life chances. Place and the idea that children at a higher rate than that of adults, endure higher rates of poverty, struggle escaping poverty and inequality. These facts were often times evident in the lives of their parents (Freeman, 2010). Schools in all neighborhoods need to now be prepared to work with students from lower socio-economic (SES) backgrounds to help them achieve at the same level as their middle and upper class peers (Freeman, 2010). If schools do not respond to the needs of their students, these children are at-risk of not being successful.

When talking about children living in poverty, the term "at-risk" often appears. The theoretical definition used by Batsche (1985) to define at-risk characteristics of the individual includes: absenteeism from school, poor grades, low math and reading scores and low self-concept. She also stated these students have a history of behavioral problems, do not have the ability to identify with others, come from a low socioeconomic background and feel isolated. Specific family characteristics also define at-risk students. Batsche (1985) discusses the student having several siblings, an absent father, a father that is unemployed, or a father that did not

finish high school. She also focused on the absence of a mother from the home during the child's early adolescent years and there being little reading material at home as factors in defining at-risk students (Batsche, 1985).

The definition of at-risk students by Gresham, Sylva, Wantz-Sutton, and Ward (2007) included: academic underachievement, poverty, social and emotional disabilities and peer rejection. Researchers, Garmezy and Rutter (1983) describe an at-risk student as:

living in poverty, being part of a chaotic or dysfunctional family, being disabled or low IQ, being yelled at or abused, being emotionally neglected or abused, being sexually or physically abused, looking after siblings, experiencing long-term absence of care-giver, witnessing extreme violence, separations, divorce, death of a loved one and frequent family moves.

If one or more of these characteristics is at play, the student is considered at-risk (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983).

Yet another explanation of at-risk students by McCann and Austin (1988) described them in three ways. First, they said that students are at-risk if they are not achieving the goals of education or are not attaining the knowledge, skills, and personalities to become productive members of society. At-risk students also do not meet the local and state standards of high school graduation and typically receive less than a 2.0 grade point average (McCann & Austin, 1988).

Secondly, McCann and Austin (1988) found that at-risk students displayed behaviors that require disciplinary action in at least three instances that interfere with theirs and others attaining an education. Lastly, at-risk students have family backgrounds that place them at risk. These characteristics could include low income to below poverty or being non-English native speakers (McCann & Austin, 1988). Resilience is the key for at-risk children to triumph.

**Resilience**

According to Garmezy (1991), resilience means the tendency to rebound, spring back or having the power to recover. In looking at children that are tested by negative events in their lives, resilient children are able to continue to strive and positively adapt to such stressors. Attributes that seem to correlate with children that were able to adapt to stressful situations include personal internal attributes, familial supports, and societal supports (Garmezy, 1991). These individual factors include activity level, having a reflective ability when entering new situations, responding to others, and having cognitive skills cited from IQ tests. The familial factors of resiliency include cohesion, parents who are concerned for the wellbeing of their children and having a caring adult if there is an absence of responsive parents. Finally, support factors that help resilient children include a person external to the family that can be used by the resilient child. This might be a teacher, a social agency, social worker, or church (Garmezy, 1991).

When describing resilience in children, Masten (2001) discussed several factors at play. This list includes factors within the family, within the child and some within the community. One factor includes having positive attachment bonds with caregivers, friends, or romantic partners and having encouraging associations with other nurturing and capable adults. In order to build resilience, one must also have intellectual and self-regulation skills (Masten, 2001). Self-efficacy, a positive self-perception, faith, hope, and a sense of meaning in life are also important factors in resilience. Effective schools and other pro-social organizations, communities with helpful services and other supports for families and children are also pertinent in the development of resilience (Masten, 2001). While researchers list many important internal

attributes, self-efficacy and hope are two major internal attributes that researchers state can help children build resilience.

### **Self-Efficacy**

Albert Bandura (1977) described self-efficacy as the belief one has in their capabilities to be able perform the required course of action that is vital to manage potential situations. Rutter (2002) stated that how long an individual will persevere when faced with adversity might be determined by a person's self-efficacy. The higher a person's sense of efficacy, the more effort, the more persistent and, more resilient a person may be (Rutter, 2002).

### **Hope**

Taking time to reflect on the positive aspects in one's life is important. Encouraging children to think about their futures in a positive way and sharing with them their dreams and goals is important in building hope (Grotberg, 1993). Hope is not a fixed trait; it is flexible (Snyder, 2000). According to Walsh (2003), hope is essential in the development of resilience. Hope engages individuals to envision and strive for a better future. Having hope means a person has a future goal, the belief this goal can be attained, and the cognitive-motivational belief that there is a path that can be created and followed towards that goal (Snyder, 2000).

Hope is sustainable and can jumpstart individuals to think about how to make their lives better (Lopez, 2013). Several studies surveying elementary, middle and high school students have explored the role of hope in predicting their performance. In every study, hope was an accurate predictor of test scores and grade point average (GPA).

According to Lopez (2013), there are three main things that hopeful students do. The first is that hopeful students are excited about the future. There is a need for children to have something for which to hope. Children need to be excited about one thing in their futures. They

then need to be excited about another thing and then another thing. This forward thinking allows students to be hopeful about their future lives (Lopez, 2013).

Students that are hopeful attend school regularly. Absenteeism can be an indicator that students will struggle academically and are at a higher risk of dropping out of school. A study conducted by Lopez (2013) looked at attendance rates of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and their level of hope. This research found that students with high levels of hope had lower rates of absenteeism than did students with lower levels of hope.

Finally, students who have hope are engaged at school. These students are invested in what is happening around them. They are eager to learn and apply their new knowledge and skills to new situations (Lopez, 2013). Working together, hope and engagement appear to help students attain short and long-term goals (Lopez, 2013).

Masten's (2001) list of factors shows that children do not seem to have to possess extraordinary talents or resources to become resilient. As the child's protective systems develop and change, so does the capacity for becoming resilient. This can arise from the relationships and resources from multiple sources in their lives and some are already in the child (Masten, 2001). When these systems are damaged and never reestablished is when children are most threatened. Having these adaptive systems restored will promote resilience in adolescence and prepare them to "weather the storms of life." (Masten, 2001).

In a study conducted by Chapin and Yang (2009), they explore social support and what that means for boys and girls and their development of resilience. Most research on resilience within low socio-economic children looks at the deficits, but a more favorable approach is preferred. This approach looks at the resilience process and positive development (Chapin &



Yang, 2009). The authors hypothesized that there would be gender differences in the structure of friend and classmate support and similarities in parental support.

The results from this study showed that a boy might feel support or lack of support in general but that these boys did not separate the level of support between the different people in their lives. The study also found that boys distinctly see friends and classmates as giving the same kind of support (Chapin & Yang, 2009). Results from the research with the female participants showed social support as being differentiated. For girls, this means that they can have a supportive family but other non-supportive relationships (Chapin & Yang, 2009). Girls discerned their friends from their classmates very distinctly when boys did not. The girls in this study might also have an easier time than boys in making up for unsupportive family by having supportive friends (Chapin & Yang, 2009). This study showed that social support is a very important attribute of the resilience process. This process may lead to positive outcomes and may be harder for boys to establish support (Chapin & Yang, 2009). The idea of resilience is very important when looking at children in poverty and children that are at-risk. For children to be able to achieve at a higher level, they need to be able to overcome the deficits they enter school with simply due to their socio-economic status (Chapin & Yang, 2009).

Two theoretical frameworks will be referenced in the course of this study. First, Ruby Payne's theory involving poverty will be utilized. Her work in poverty is extensive and very thorough. A second framework that will be used is Ann Masten's theoretical framework involving the idea that building resilience is a process and that it is not a fixed trait. These theoretical frameworks will add to the richness and depth of this study.

**Role of Educators**

People are not surprised when children living in poverty are unsuccessful in school or have missteps in life (Croninger, 1991). People are surprised when children in poverty are successful in school and can cope when adversity comes into their lives (Croninger, 1991). Some children living in poverty actually do very well in school and even become famous or become cultural heroes. Very little is known about these children. Some psychologists call these children resilient (Croninger, 1991). Children able to build resilience in the face of very difficult life experiences can and do become capable adults.

Some initial findings from studies reveal that the role of educators is important in a child's ability to build resilience, especially those living in poverty (Croninger, 1991). Fostering resilience can be done by educators building relationships with students, having high expectations for success, helping children develop academically and socially, working closely with the child's caregivers, and helping children and their families find resources to help them deal with stressful life events (Croninger, 1991). While educators cannot control every factor involved in a child building resilience, they can develop an environment that acknowledges the adversity children live through and supports the traits children need to build resilience.

Short-lived and peripheral programs do not serve students living in poverty well (Doll & Lyon, 1998). Consistent and firm sources of support fully incorporated into the classroom culture are what children in poverty need in order to build resilience. The work educators do in their classrooms each day needs to be steeped with interactions and instructional strategies that can make a positive difference in the lives of students who are at-risk (Downey, 2008). There are several ways educators can help children in poverty build resilience.

### **Relationships**

Prior research has shown that a child's ability to build resilience is clearly linked to the child's connection with his or her teachers (Downey, 2008). Children living in adverse situations, such as poverty, need educators that are able to build positive and healthy relationships with them. The significance of the relationships educators build with students living in adversity cannot be overemphasized.

According to Borman and Overman (2004) and Werner (1990), students who are successful despite having adverse situations in their lives, have at least one educator who believes in them and functions as a role model and supportive adult. Students at-risk need educators in their lives that have the ability to build positive, strong, and personal relationships that include respect, trust, care, and cohesiveness (Brooks, 2006). Johnson (1997) and Benard (2004) state that developing a meaningful connection to a meaningful adult seems to contribute most to the success of at-risk children and adolescents

An educator that helps a student facing adversity recognizes and values his or her unique abilities, strengths, and personal achievements is needed. Students at-risk will not benefit from educators artificially building their egos, they need educators who will provide them with the ability to ground their self-esteem in academic competency, their accomplishments, and help them build coping skills (Reis, Colbert & Herbert, 2005). Educators who use a strengths-based approach in working with at-risk students find students living in adversity become role models and helpers to others. Direct and honest feedback should be given, not empty compliments (Downey, 2008). This approach helps students take the skills they are learning in the classroom and apply them to the outside world.

A bond between an educator who is competent and emotionally stable and a student is essential in the lives of children to help them overcome adversity (Krovetz, 1999). After a family member, a favorite teacher is reported to be the most positive role model in the lives of students (Werner, 1996). This means that educators need to look beyond the hostility that some students display and look to the underlying insecurities really there. This is to find the strengths and possibilities within each student (Werner, 1996). Building a healthy relationship between an educator and student is very important in helping a child in poverty build resilience.

### **High Expectations**

Students at-risk need teachers who emphasize the importance of effort and success and hold high expectations (Dunn, 2004). Even though a student may be at-risk, this does not mean they are poor students or do not want to learn. Like other students, at-risk students will work to the level of expectation set by their teachers (Downey, 2008). If these students have the belief they can achieve, they will. High expectations need to be set by teachers for their at-risk students and they must have consequences for those that do not follow through (Downey, 2008).

In a 2008 study, Downey found that educators who maintain high, realistic expectations for students helps them build resilience. Educators can uphold high expectations for at-risk students by keeping a can-do attitude, stressing the importance of effort and success, and providing proper support. It is imperative that educators remember that while a student may be at-risk, this does not mean they are not good students or do not want to learn (Dunn, 2004). Most students will work to the level of expectation set for them and will achieve in most cases if they believe they can (Downey, 2008). Educators that maintain high expectations that are attainable for the student help students in poverty build resilience (Downey, 2008).

### **Personal/Social Skills Development**

When students living with adversity have the opportunity to build skills in communication, coping with stress, managing conflict, problem solving, decision-making, and critical thinking, they are also building resilience (Brooks, 2006). Success is more likely for at-risk students when they are able to see that the classroom skills they are learning are directly related to the “real world.” This in turn helps them develop a strong sense of future (Kinney, Eaton, Bain, Williams, & Newcombe, 1995). These prosocial skills are essential to the ability for at-risk students to compensate for risk factors (Johnson, 1997). This success helps at-risk students build self-esteem.

### **Work with caregivers**

Guerra and Nelson (2009) state that students benefit from solid school-home connections. Initially, the connection between home and school was characterized as mothers volunteering in their child’s classroom and providing support for other school activities (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). More recently, the relationship between home and school has been thought of in broader terms. Educators now recognize that the connections between home and school can take many forms and reaches beyond parents volunteering in classrooms (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Parental engagement encompasses parents and educators working together to meet the goals of the school (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Parents engagement in school improves the educational experience for all students, not just their own (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Working alongside the caregiver/s for a child in poverty is essential in helping the child build resilience.

### **Resources**

Educators have the ability to help students in poverty find resources they may not have access to otherwise. One resource that has recently been seen as a prevention method for “at-

risk” youth, such as those living in poverty, is mentoring. At a rapid rate, youth intervention programs sponsored by social service agencies and educational institutions across the country have added mentoring pieces (de Anda, 2001). Mentors provide at-risk youth with access to resources that may otherwise not be available to them. They can also provide psychological and emotional supports that help foster changes in behavior and attitude in the at-risk youth they work with (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1989). These outside resources can come in many forms such as social service agencies, health care, or counseling. One main resource is mentoring programs. Most schools have access to outside resources, such as mentoring programs, to help a child living in poverty build resilience. Figure 1 represents the role educators can play in helping students build resilience.

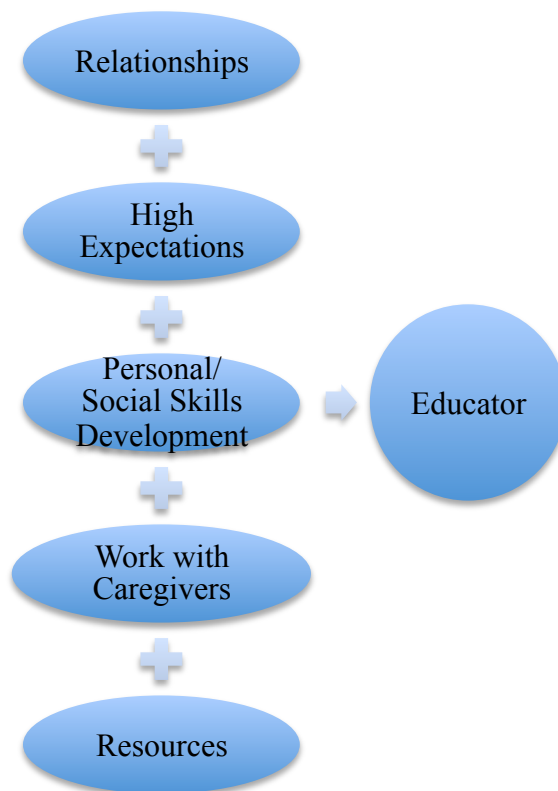


Figure 1: Role of Educator

## Summary

This review of literature looked at the relationships between children living in poverty and the role educators play in helping these children build resilience. In looking at the definition of poverty according to Payne (1996), one can see that poverty includes more than just finances. A person can be impoverished if he/she are lacking other resources such as emotional, social, mental, or physical resources For the purpose of this study, the definition of poverty will look at finances. Payne (1996) states that the ability to move out of poverty is more dependent on these resources than it is upon financial resources. Moving out of poverty requires a child to build resilience.

One way an at-risk student can achieve is for them to have resilience. Resiliency is not a single trait that someone possesses; it is gained through a process. This process includes many factors such as bonds with competent adults, positive self-perceptions, self-efficacy and faith, hope, and a sense of meaning in life. While living in poverty leads a child to be at-risk of not being successful in school and in life, educators can play a fundamental role in helping a child build resilience when adversity, such as poverty, comes into their lives. Educators play an integral part in a child's ability to build resilience.

Educators need to be prepared to meet at-risk students where they are at and help reduce the achievement gap between children in poverty and those not in poverty (Payne, 1996). Living in poverty is just one of many risk factors that may place a child at-risk for not achieving at a high level. While most previous research focused on the relationship between low-socioeconomic status and low academic achievement, recent research has shown that being at-risk does not mean a child cannot achieve (Masten, 2001).

Effective educators who possess the knowledge necessary to help at-risk students experience resilience are important. Everyday interactions in the classroom between educators and students do matter. Maintaining high expectations for students living with adversity is fundamental in their ability to build resilience. When at-risk students see that the lessons learned in the classroom will benefit them in the “real world,” they are more likely to succeed. The role of educators in helping students living in poverty build resilience is fundamental.



### Chapter Three: Research Methods

#### **Research Design**

Chapter three contains a description of the methodology used to select the study participants, data collection, and methods used to analyze the data in this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study. The results collected from this study will add to the literature and previous research in the area of the educator's role in helping children in poverty build resilience. Learning is able to take place for children when they are free from hunger, are warm, and feel a sense of care from the people in their environment (Bates, 1991). This is not always easy for children living in adversity, such as poverty (Bates, 1991). In order to help children in poverty build resilience, educators need to help provide information to families about services such as governmental programs and possibly even helping families obtain housing, as well as, to help students cultivate their internal attributes (Gebre-Egziabher, 1991). According to Gebre-Egziabher (1991), educators need to advocate for all their children and their families.

This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was conducted in two phases. First, an online questionnaire was employed to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. The second phase of this mixed-methods study explored more deeply the role educators played in the development of resilience in students at two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city. Face-to-face interviews (Appendix B), field notes, and a card sort activity (Appendix C) were utilized to gather information in this phase. The online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity were used to collect data to investigate the central research question for this study.

There are many strengths in using a mixed-methods study. One is that it often provides a more complete picture of a particular phenomenon than qualitative or quantitative research could do separately. A mixed-methods study also allows the research itself to develop as completely as possible (Creswell, 2009). Two sets of data were collected around the same central research questions rather than one set of data. The quantitative data in an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design is collected before the qualitative data (Creswell, 2013). In the first phase, quantitative data was collected from the population by use of a questionnaire. These results were elaborated upon the more in-depth qualitative phase through the use of face-to-face interviews and a card sort activity (Creswell, 2013).

The quantitative data in this study was collected through the use of an online questionnaire. The use of an online questionnaire during the quantitative phase of this mixed-methods study provided the researcher with a quick way to collect data (Creswell, 2013). An online questionnaire also allowed the participants to remain anonymous. They may provide more truthful responses than they would otherwise. This could be especially true if the questions are sensitive or controversial in nature (Creswell, 2013).

The qualitative data collected, analyzed, and reported can be used to explain in more detail the quantitative data (Creswell, 2009). A phenomenological qualitative method was used for the second phase of this study in order to attempt to understand the study participants' perspectives and views on this topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Creswell (2013) describes phenomenological research as that which describes a common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a specific concept or phenomenon. During the qualitative phase of this study, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and a card sort activity were used and were

appropriate for the type of questions that were asked in this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design study.

Through the use of an online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and a card sort activity with students who indicated they lived in poverty while in high school, the researcher hoped to answer the central research question: What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience?

### **Identification of Sample/Participants and Setting**

The sample for this proposed research study was a purposive sample. A purposive sample was appropriate for this study because this type of sample is chosen for a particular purpose (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The specific purpose of this sample was to identify participants that qualified for free/reduced lunch for at least or more than one year while in high school. These participants provided insight into the role educators played in their ability to build resilience.

The knowledge regarding the role educators play in the development of resilience is why this specific population was chosen to participate in this study. This sample also aligned with the purpose of the study to use an online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and a card sort activity to survey students about the role educator's play in the development of resilience in children living in adversity, such as poverty. This purposive sample was taken from two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city.

Participants were between the ages of 19 and 21. This age range was appropriate for legal and recall purposes. Legally, all persons under the age of 19 years are considered minors in this Midwestern city and state (Infant and Juvenile Statue, 1965). Once a person reaches the age of 19, he/she has reached the age of majority and is considered an adult. He or she then attains all

of the rights and responsibilities granted or imposed by statute or common law and are legally responsible (Infant and Juvenile Statute, 1965).

For the purposes of recall, persons over the age of 21 may not have a clear memory of their high school experiences. Being able to remember the past requires the ability to distinguish between those events that really happened and those that were only imagined (Mitchell & Johnson, 2009). Having this ability includes being able to successfully retrieve information about prior events along with the use of search and decision processes to retrieve this information from memory and assess its accuracy (McDonough & Gallo, 2013). Having a deficit in either of these procedures may increase memory confusions with aging (McDonough & Gallo, 2013).

Episodic memory is having the ability to mentally re-experience past events (Tulving, 1972). Episodic memory includes contextual information such as location, time, and the emotions associated with the experience. This type of memory can be abundantly re-experienced since specific contexts are bound to the episodic representation. (Tulving, 1972). Over time however, contextual information is easily forgotten, causing the re-experienced events to become less vivid (Tulving, 1972). Studies conducted by Davidson and Gilsky (2001) and McIntyre and Craik (1987) found that when comparing younger adults with older adults' performance on episodic memory tasks, there is a loss of contextual information that increases as their age advances. For purposes of this study, it was important for the participants to be of a younger age due to the likelihood of memory loss issues in older participants.

The first step in selecting the sample for this research study was to gather a list of all program directors at both of the institutions of higher education selected for use in this study. The second step was to contact the program directors and ask if they were willing to identify

professors that teach first year students. This contact was made by emailing a cover letter (Appendix D) explaining the purpose of the study and asking the program directors to identify for the researcher those professors in their respective departments that taught first year students. Once professors who teach first year students were identified, another cover letter (Appendix E) was sent asking for their help in soliciting volunteers for this research study. Once professors agreed to forward the study information onto their students, an email message (Appendix F) including information about the study, consent form (Appendix G), Rights of Research Participants (Appendix H), and the link to the resilience questionnaire was forwarded to professors. The professors were asked to forward this email to their students. The sample was those students who agreed to volunteer for the study.

For the initial quantitative phase of the study, a sample size of a minimum of 50 students and a maximum of 100 students was anticipated. Participants completed an online questionnaire during the quantitative phase where they identified the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to their ability to build resilience. These initial participants had the opportunity to volunteer for the qualitative phase of the study. The sample size for the second phase of the study was strongly influenced by the eligibility criteria of the students and their willingness to volunteer. The expected sample size for the qualitative phase was from five to 25 participants (Creswell, 1998).

According to Creswell (2012), the sample size in qualitative data is typically a few individuals. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth picture of a concept. The ability to do this is reduced with the addition of each new participant (Creswell, 2012). Recruiting a smaller sample size will provide the researcher with the ability to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in

poverty to build resilience. The researcher began with five participants and if saturation was not reached; the researcher would have added more participants to the study until saturation was attained. Saturation occurs when no new information is seen or heard by the researcher when looking at the data (Siegle, 2002). In this study, saturation was achieved with five participants.

### **Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria for Sample**

Excluded from this sample were those students who did not qualify for free/reduced lunch while in high school. Also excluded were those students that qualified for free/reduced lunch for less than one year while in high school. According to Ruby Payne (1996), situational poverty occurs for a short period of time and is caused by circumstances such as death, illness, divorce, or loss of job. This study did not focus on students who lived in poverty for less than one year since situational poverty can be very fluid (Payne, 1996).

Students under the age of 19 were also excluded, as well as, those students over the age of 21. Students under the age of nineteen have not reached the age of consent in the Midwestern city and state where this research was conducted and were not be allowed to participate. Those students over the age of 21 are farther removed from high school and, thus, may not have clear recollections about their experiences.

Included in this sample were those students who indicated they qualified for free/reduced lunch while in high school for at least one year or more. Included in this study were students who were currently enrolled at one of the institutions of higher education selected for this study. Only students that had reached the age of 19 and who were not over the age of 21 were included in this study.

**Setting**

The participants, who volunteered for the study, completed an online questionnaire during the two-week time period selected by the researcher. Completion of the questionnaire by the participant was on their own time in settings of their choosing. The setting for the second phase of this research study was conducted in a comfortable and familiar place identified by the study participant. The face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity were conducted in a quiet area where interruptions did not occur. This environment allowed for study conditions to be carefully regulated (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A sign was placed on the door stating “Interview in progress - Please do not disturb” if a common area was used.

**Ethical Considerations**

Prior to the launch of this study, the researcher obtained approval from College of Saint Mary Institutional Review Board (IRB) (2012). Once IRB approval was received, and before any data collection occurred, all study participants were required to sign a consent form provided by the College of Saint Mary (2012). This consent form was included with the online questionnaire and was required to be completed before the study participants launched the questionnaire. The decision to participate was voluntary and without coercion or reward. The study participants were able to withdraw and were allowed to ask questions at any point during the study. This study posed less than minimal risk to the participants.

Applicable to this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the researcher maintained the dignity, respect, and ethical considerations of the research participants. The participants retained all legal rights as outlined by College of Saint Mary (2012) while volunteering for this study. This study took place in a natural setting on the campus where the study participants attended classes or where they felt most comfortable. The researcher explained

the purpose of the study, the different data collection methods that were utilized in this study, and obtained written consent from the study participants before any data collection occurred.

At the time consent was acquired, the study participants were informed there were no perceived risks or direct benefits to them while being a part of this study. Those participants who signed the consent form agreed to complete the online questionnaire and if he or she chose to do so, also agreed to participate in the face-to-face interviews and card sort activity. They also agreed to be audio recorded during the face-to-face interview and the card sort activity. The length of the online questionnaire ranged from 15-20 minutes and the face-to-face interview and card sort activity lasted from 30 minutes to no more than one hour.

The first phase of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was for study participants to complete the online questionnaire. The participants received the link from their professor. Once data from the questionnaire was collected and analyzed, participants who agreed to complete a face-to-face interview and card sort activity were contacted using contact information provided on the online questionnaire.

This questionnaire utilized a Likert scale. The scale ranged from “Not at all true,” “A little true,” “Pretty much true,” to “Very much true.” Once data collection was complete, numbers were assigned to each category in order to complete statistical analysis. Blaikie (2003) states that it is common for Likert scales to be treated as a rating scale and to “assume that the equal intervals hold between the response categories.” Quantitative data was collected through the use of an online questionnaire during phase one of this study.

During the second, qualitative phase of this study, the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview and card sort activity with each participant. Each interview and card sort activity took place at a choosing of the participant and lasted no more than one hour. The interviews were



then transcribed, verbatim, from the interview using the audio recording. Each study participant received a copy of the transcript within two days of the interview and was asked to review the transcription for accuracy. The study participant had the opportunity to reply as to whether they agreed or disagreed with the summary identified. The transcript was then returned to the researcher.

The researcher for this study will store the data, transcripts, and audio recordings in a secured and locked safe located in a locked office. This study material will be stored for seven years. After seven years, all documentation related to this research study will be destroyed. All ethical considerations were considered throughout the course of this study.

### **Data Collection**

In data collection, a mixed-methods design has the ability for one method to compensate for the other method if one is weaker. For example, if the data collected from the qualitative phase of the study is not clear or strong standing alone, the quantitative data gathered can help explain the qualitative data (Collins & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In addition, in using qualitative data alone, generalizability can be difficult. Using a mixed-methods design can help the data collected in the qualitative phase of the study to be more generalizable to the larger population as it is backed up by quantitative data (Collins & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The multipart, multilayered, and in-depth approach mixed-methods design offers is beneficial in studying a complex phenomenon and allows for expansion on a theory. Mixed method design can also maximize interpretation and understanding of the findings (Smith, 2012). Mixed-methods design is appropriate for this study.

In the first phase of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study, quantitative data was collected through the use of an online questionnaire related to resilience. The questionnaire

was distributed through professors that teach first year students at the two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city chosen for this study. Professors that agreed to pass on the information about this study were sent an email that included the link to the online questionnaire and consent form. This email was then to be forwarded to students in their class. This online questionnaire related to resilience and took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

In the second phase of this study, qualitative data was collected. Qualitative studies can produce a plethora of useful information through the use of interviews (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters (Shank, 2006). Interviews are believed to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena (Shank, 2006). Interviews conducted using semi-structured research questions utilize a list of predetermined questions that are asked to the participants with little or no variation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

A phenomenological method was used for the second phase of this study in order to attempt to understand the study participants' perspectives and views on this topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The face-to-face interviews and card sort activity were conducted in a natural setting chosen by the study participant. The face-to-face interviews and card sort activity lasted 30 minutes to one hour.

The interview questions were semi-structured in nature. These semi-structured interviews follow a standard set of questions with one or more individually tailored questions in order to probe for more information or to gain clarification (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Face-to-face interviews have the advantage of allowing the researcher to establish rapport with participants and gain their cooperation. These types of interviews yield the highest response rates in research

(Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The interviews were audio recorded using the same recording device. The researcher read a script for each interview in order to maintain consistency.

Data collection for this study included participants completing a card sort activity. According to Spencer (2004), a card sort activity is one way to find patterns and to identify trends. This process is user-centered and involves sorting cards, which are labeled with content related to a specific main group. The group and labeled cards relate to information the participants already possess (Spencer, 2004). A closed card sort activity is conducted by asking the study participants to place cards including an established set of terms around a pre-established primary group (Spencer, 2004).

The card sort activity was completed at the conclusion of the interview. The participants were notified that, as with their responses to the interview questions, the responses to the card sort activity would be kept confidential. They were also assured there were no correct answers in this activity. The study participant was given one 5" X 7" card with the words "*educator and resilience*" written in black ink. The study participant was given sixteen 3" X 5" cards. Each card had one of these phrases written in black ink that related to ways educators help students in poverty build resilience. These phrases included:

Was someone I trusted and respected.

Showed me how to do things right by the way they did things.

Provided me opportunities to experience success.

I trusted them no matter what, believed in me.

Built a healthy personal relationship with me.

Promoted my personal strengths.

Supported me.

Allowed me to enjoy achievement.

Wanted me to learn to do things on my own.

Helped me when I was sick, in danger, or needed to learn.

Served as a role model.

Were aware of the hurdles I face.

Held high expectations for me.

Set limits for me so I knew when to stop before there was danger or trouble.

Provided information/access to outside resources (Appendix C).

The researcher instructed the participant to shuffle the cards then select cards that best described what educators did that helped them build resilience, placing them on the table around the “*educator and resilience*” card. Once the participant completed the task, the researcher asked the participant to explain their choices. These responses were also audio recorded. A picture of the arrangement of words was taken with no identifying information in the picture.

During the card sort activity, study participants were given enough time to make a thoughtful sort. A closed card sort should last no longer than one hour (Deaton, 2002). Given too much time to complete the card sort, the participant may become bored (Deaton, 2002). The participants were then asked to explain why they selected the cards they did. This allowed the researcher not to have to guess why the participant sorted the cards the way he or she did (Deaton, 2002). The themes identified from the face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity added depth to the results from the initial questionnaire.

The first phase of data collection for this study asked participants to complete an online questionnaire relating to resilience. The online questionnaire included eight statements related to the role educators played in students in poverty while in high school build resilience. The

completion time for the online questionnaire was 15-20 minutes. During the second phase of this study, face-to-face interviews and a card sort activity were conducted. The face-to-face interviews were audio recorded in order to document the study participant's responses to the interview questions. The researcher took field notes during the face-to-face interviews. Audio recording was also utilized during the card sort activity to document the explanations given by the participants as to why they selected the cards they did. A picture of the completed card sort activity was also taken. This concluded the data-gathering phase of this study.

Through the use of an online questionnaire related to resilience, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and a card sort activity, the researcher answered the central research question: What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience?

### **Data Quality Measures**

Reliability and validity were considered during each phase of this study. Reliability refers to idea that the scores from an instrument used to collect data are stable and consistent (Creswell, 2012). The scores from the instrument should be approximately the same when the instrument is administered multiple times at varying times (Creswell, 2012). These scores should also be consistent. When a participant answers certain questions in one manner, he or she should answer related questions in the same manner (Creswell, 2012). During this study, reliability was measured by internal consistency reliability (Creswell, 2012).

Creswell (2012) defines validity as the “development of sound evidence to demonstrate that the intended test interpretation of the concept matches the proposed purpose of the test.”

Joppe (2000) also provides the following explanation of what validity is in research:

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to

measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others (p. 1).

To ensure the validity of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods research study, the researcher looked at the construct validity of the instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). When an instrument measures a characteristic that cannot be directly observed but is assumed to exist based on patterns in people's behavior, this refers to the instrument's construct validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Some evidence should be found that shows the approach a researcher used to collect data ensures the construct in question does exist (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Researchers may ask questions, present tasks, or observe behaviors to assess an underlying construct in order to measure the construct in question (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

To further confirm validity during this explanatory sequential mixed-methods sequential study, two validity methods were used during the qualitative phase: the first being member check, the second was peer review. Member check was conducted after the qualitative phase of this study. Once the face-to-face interviews were completed and transcribed, the researcher identified emerging themes from the transcripts. Each participant then received a copy of her transcript. The participant was asked to verify that she agreed that the transcript was a true representation of the interview and card sort activity (Creswell, 2013). The participant was asked to sign the transcription, and return it to the researcher for safekeeping.

The second method used by the researcher to confirm validity for the qualitative phase of this study was to have the transcripts reviewed by a peer reviewer. The peer reviewer, who was a peer of the researcher, asked hard questions about the methods employed, the meanings of the

data, and any interpretations made (Creswell, 2013). The peer reviewer also provided the researcher with an opportunity to release feelings (Creswell, 2013). Both the peer reviewer and researcher kept a written account of their “peer debriefing session” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher provided the peer reviewer a copy of the transcribed interview, with the themes coded at the bottom of the transcription. A peer reviewer was utilized in order to further validate the results found during the qualitative phase of this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data collected in this research study was validated according to the methods suggested by Creswell (2013). The methods of validation used for the qualitative phase were: member check and peer review.

Triangulation was also achieved to further validate the findings in this study. In triangulation, researchers use multiple and varying sources and methods to corroborate the evidence they have found from different sources to highlight a theme or perspective (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation occurred with data collected by the online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, and card sort activity. Along with these methods of insuring reliability and validity, the instrument itself, The California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd, 2013) has demonstrated psychometric reliability and construct validity for each of its asset items and clusters of assets (WestEd, 2013). Appropriate reliability and validity measures were undertaken during this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study.

### **Data Analysis Summary**

This section reveals the analysis for this explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. In analyzing qualitative research, an inductive process is used to distinguish themes, which have been identified from the data. Once this is completed, deductive reasoning is used to verify the findings with additional information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The themes that emerged from

the findings were used to help the researcher make sense of the data (Creswell, 2012). The researcher identified themes from the responses to the online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity. Data analysis occurred for each phase of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study. The data collected for each phase was not converged or integrated (Creswell, 2012). This design allows for the best of the quantitative and qualitative data to shine through by examining the quantitative results from the first phase and then elaborating on and exploring further those findings through the in-depth second qualitative phase (Creswell, 2012). Further analysis included looking at themes identified by the researcher from the qualitative phase of this study.



## Chapter Four: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. The first section of this chapter describes the degree to which educators played a role in supporting high school students living in poverty build resilience. To explore this topic, participants completed an online questionnaire. The second section of this chapter explores the results of the face-to-face interviews, field notes, and a card sort activity conducted during this study. Data from this phase of the study was then analyzed by using coding to determine overarching themes (Creswell, 2013). Five themes were identified from the data obtained from the participant interviews:

1. Educators helped participants to utilize their personal stubbornness or strength
2. Educators helped participants to overcome a bad or difficult situation
3. Educators helped participants push toward a goal
4. Educators were encouraging
5. Educators built relationships with participants

The researcher collected a significant amount of data with which to refer and report on the central research question that guided this study. The research question is: What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience? The first phase of this research study was the quantitative portion. Below are the findings from the online questionnaire during the quantitative phase.

### Quantitative Findings and Analysis

The first phase of this explanatory mixed-methods study utilized an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire included eight statements related to the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. These statements were adapted from the California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd, 2013) and all related to the overarching heading “At my school there was an adult...” Participants responded to the questions on a Likert scale. The scale ranged from “Not at all true,” “A little true,” “Pretty much true,” to “Very much true.” The results from the eight statements follow.

Fifty-six questionnaires were completed. Students attending a large community college in a Midwestern city completed the majority of questionnaires. The minority of questionnaires completed was by students attending a very small private university in a Midwestern city. The statements on the questionnaire related to what occurred at the participants’ high schools with an adult other than their parents or guardians.

The first statement on the questionnaire asked if there was an adult at the participants’ school “Who really cared about me.” The majority of the participants, 70%, answered in a positive manner, “Pretty much true” and “Very much true.” Only 30% of the respondents answered “A little true” and “Not at all true.” Table 1 reports the responses for the online questionnaire to statement one.

Table 1 At my school there was an adult “Who really cared about me”

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	4	7%
A little true	13	23%
Pretty much true	16	29%
Very much true	23	41%

Statement number two from the questionnaire asked if there was an adult at the respondents' school "Who told me when I did a good job in my classes." The majority of respondents, 75%, answered "Very much true" and "Pretty much true." Only 7% respondents answered, "Not at all true" and 18% respondents answered "A little true." Table 2 represents all responses collected for this statement.

Table 2 At my school there was an adult "Who told me when I did a good job in my classes"

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	4	7%
A little true	10	18%
Pretty much true	19	34%
Very much true	23	41%

Statement three inquired if the respondent had an adult at school "Who noticed when I was upset about something." Most of the respondents indicated "A little true" when responding to this statement. 16% of respondents chose "Very much true" for this statement and 16% selected "Not at all true." For the response "Pretty much true," 20% of respondents felt this way.

Table 3 illustrates the responses for statement number three.

Table 3 At my school there was an adult "Who noticed when I was upset about something"

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	9	16%
A little true	27	48%
Pretty much true	11	20%
Very much true	9	16%

Statement four questioned if the respondent had an adult at school "Who believed that I would be a success in life." The majority of respondents, 76%, selected "Very much true" or

“Pretty much true” for this statement. While only 16% choose “A little true” and only 7% selected “Not at all true.” Table 4 illustrates the results from statement number four.

Table 4 At my school there was an adult “Who believed that I would be a success in life”

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	4	7%
A little true	9	16%
Pretty much true	26	46%
Very much true	17	31%

Statement five probed for information related to an adult at the respondents’ school “Who always wanted me to do my best in everything I tried.” A large number of participants, 71%, selected “Very much true” and “Pretty much true” in responding to this statement. Only nine, 16%, of respondents answered, “A little true” and only seven or 13% replied with “Not at all true.” Table 5 reports all data collected for this statement.

Table 5 At my school there was an adult “Who always wanted me to do my best in everything I tried”

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	7	13%
A little true	9	16%
Pretty much true	26	46%
Very much true	14	25%

Statement six investigated if the respondents had an adult in school “Whom I trusted.” The majority of respondents, 65%, answered either “Very much true” or “Pretty much true” to this statement. Only 20 respondents, 35%, selected “A little true” or “Not at all true.” Table 6 reports the results for statement six.

Table 6 At my school there was an adult “Whom I trusted”

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	8	14%
A little true	12	21%
Pretty much true	21	38%
Very much true	15	27%

Statement seven asked respondents if they had an adult in school “Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future.” For statement seven, 25% of respondents answered “Very much true.” Only 7% of respondents selected “Not at all true” for this statement. The statements “A little true” and “Pretty much true” indicated 68% of respondents felt this way. Table 7 represents all results from statement seven.

Table 7 At my school there was an adult “Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future”

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	4	7%
A little true	16	29%
Pretty much true	22	39%
Very much true	14	25%

The final statement explored the idea of hope. The statement asked participants if they had an adult in their school “Who gave me hope for my life and for my future.” The majority of respondents answered “Very much true” and “Pretty much true,” with a response of 64% responding favorably to this statement. The minority of respondents, 7%, stated this was “Not at all true” and 29% stated this was “A little true.” Table 8 reports on the results collected for this statement.

Table 8 At my school there was an adult “Who gave me hope for my life and for my future”

Answer	Response	%
Not at all true	4	7%
A little true	16	29%
Pretty much true	22	39%
Very much true	14	25%

Overall, the results of the 56 participants to the eight online statements were positive in nature. The results of the participants' responses to the online questionnaire are as follows. Three out of five participants responded to statement number one: There was an adult at my school "*Who cared about me*" with "Very much true," one stated "Pretty much true," and one selected "Not at all true." For statement number two: There was an adult at my school "*Who told me I did a good job in my classes,*" four out of five respondents answered "Very much true," an adult at their school "*Who noticed when I was upset about something.*" Two participants answered "Pretty much true", one answered "Not at all true," one selected "Very much true," and one respondent chose "Pretty much true." In response to the fourth statement: There was an adult at my school "*Who believed I would be a success in life,*" three respondents answered "Very much true," while two selected "Pretty much true." Statement number five inquired if the respondents had someone at their school "*Who always wanted me to do my best in everything I tried.*" Three answered with "Very much true," and two selected "Pretty much true."

The answers for statement number six: There was an adult at my school "*Whom I trusted*" ranged from one respondent answering "Pretty much true," one answering "Not at all true," and three stating "Very much true." Statement seven was; There was an adult at my school "*Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future.*" Responses to this statement ranged from three respondents indicating "Very much true," one answering "A little true," and one stating "Pretty much true." The last statement on the questionnaire was; There

was an adult at my school “*Who gave me hope for my life and for my future.*” Two responded with “Pretty much true,” two respondents answered “Very much true,” and one replied “Not at all true.” See table 9.

<b>At my school there was an adult:</b>	<b>Susan</b>	<b>Becky</b>	<b>Sarah</b>	<b>Carol</b>	<b>Rachel</b>
<b>Who Cared About me</b>	Pretty much true	Very much true	Not at all true	Very much true	Very much true
<b>Who told me I did a good job in my classes</b>	Very much true	Very much true	Very much true	Very much true	Pretty much true
<b>Who noticed when I was upset about something</b>	A little true	Very much true	Not at all true	Pretty much true	Pretty much true
<b>Who believed that I would be a success in life</b>	Pretty much true	Very much true	Pretty much true	Very much true	Very much true
<b>Who always wanted me to do my best in everything I tried</b>	Very much true	Pretty much true	Pretty much true	Very much true	Very much true
<b>Whom I trusted</b>	Very much true	Pretty much true	Not at all true	Very much true	Very much true
<b>Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future</b>	Pretty much true	Very much true	A little true	Very much true	Very much true
<b>Who gave me hope for my life and for my future</b>	Pretty much true	Pretty much true	Not at all true	Very much true	Very much true

Table 9 Results from on-line questionnaire

Analysis of Susan's responses to the questions on the online questionnaire and comparison of them with her responses to the face-to-face interview questions, found that her responses on the online questionnaire and interviews were consistent. For example, in responding to statement number one, "Who cared about me," Susan answered "Pretty much true" and in her interview she stated that there were several people she could name that helped her. She stated that once her school district found out she had a problem, they did not stop until they found a solution for her.

Becky responded to all of the eight online statements with either "Very much true" or "Pretty much true." Her responses to the interview questions were all consistent with her online responses. She stated that a teacher was always pushing her for something better, she encouraged her to do way better and was always there for her no matter what situation she had. Becky's responses to the interview questions and online questionnaire were very favorable toward the role educators played in her life and her ability to build resilience.

Sarah's responses to the online questionnaire and interview questions were not consistent. Her responses to the online questionnaire ranged from four responses being "Not at all true," one response was "Very much true," two responses were "Pretty much true," and one response was "A little true." However, in looking at the responses to her interview questions, she was positive in her responses. For example, on the online questionnaire, Sarah stated that she did not have anyone whom cared about her, but in her interview she spoke of a teacher that was very positive with her and knew that in order for her to understand something, the teacher needed to give her the logical consequences of not completing the task. She also stated that an educator would "be on her to get it done" when she did not complete something, but on her online questionnaire in



responding to the statement, there was an adult at my school “Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future” she chose “A little true.”

All of Carol’s responses to the online questionnaire were “Very much true,” except for one where she chose “Pretty much true.” In response to the interview question asking her to describe the characteristics and practices of the educators in her life that provided support for her during her high school education, Carol stated she had a homeroom teacher and guidance counselor that also had her sister when she was in school. Carol spoke about this being a “family thing.” These people were always on her about her grades, making sure she was going to class, and doing her homework. These responses are very consistent with her responses to the online questionnaire.

All of Rachel’s responses to the online questionnaire were positive. Six responses were “Very much true” and two responses were “Pretty much true.” Rachel stated that she had great people in high school that helped push her to get her high school diploma after her son was born right before her senior year in high school. She also indicated that they encouraged her to continue going to school and to give her son a better life.

## **Qualitative Findings**

### **Field Notes**

The researcher took field notes during each of the interviews and added to the notes at the conclusion of the interviews. Field notes provided a richer understanding of the findings in the quantitative and qualitative data. Writing field notes is not simply copying down “facts” about “what happened.” Field notes are descriptive accounts of selected and emphasized features and actions (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011). Field notes are the researchers’ recordings of what they hear, see, and any experiences they may have during the course of collecting data.

Researchers can be easily engrossed in the data collection process and may miss what is happening during that time. Field notes are a combination of descriptive notes and reflective notes, which add to the data collection process (Groenwald, 2004).

Within two days of the completion of interviews, the researcher e-mailed a copy of the transcribed interview to the participant. The rapid turnaround allowed participants to recall more clearly the responses they gave to the interview questions. This also allowed for member-checking verification (Creswell, 2012). Participants reviewed the transcription and validated what was transcribed. Following are the field notes taken during each of the interviews conducted for this research study.

### **Susan**

Susan was an African-American female in her early twenties. She was a single mother that had completed her high school graduation two years after her original graduation date. She was currently attending college part-time to become a nurse and working part-time at an elementary school. Susan was very mature for her age and eager to talk about the goals she had accomplished despite being a teen mother. At the time of the interview, Susan was living with her son at her mother's home with no support from the baby's father. She was looking forward to attending college full-time during the spring semester and to continue to work part-time. Her part-time job at the elementary school provided her with free daycare services for her son, which was very important to her.

The researcher met with Susan in an office at the school she attended. She chose this setting due to the close proximity to her home, work, and daycare facility for her son. Susan was available to meet between work and picking her son up from daycare. The researcher arrived at

2:20 p.m., with Susan arriving shortly thereafter. Susan was very energetic and displayed a confidence within her.

The researcher asked Susan to choose where she wanted to sit at the round table. Susan quickly picked a seat away from the door and sat her purse on the floor. Once seated, she leaned forward on the table with her arms crossed in front of her. While she seemed apprehensive at first, Susan quickly relaxed and expressed her readiness to begin the interview. Once the consent form was completed, the researcher started the recorder and began the interview.

Susan responded to the interview questions with ease and was very thoughtful in her responses. Her body language was relaxed and animated throughout the entire interview. She was not rushed and conveyed a sense of peace when replying to the interview questions. Susan expressed a sense of gratitude when discussing the educators in her life that helped her achieve her goals and on the path to providing her son a “better life.”

### **Becky**

Becky was a very shy and reserved Hispanic female. The interview was scheduled on a Wednesday evening and began at 7:30 p.m. at the participants’ apartment. At the time of the interview, Becky did not have a car and was dependent on her sister and brother-in-law for rides to and from work and school. While the outside of the apartment building looked very run down and old, Becky’s apartment was very clean and organized with pictures of her family on the walls and coffee tables. There were also pictures of Jesus on several walls and a rosary hanging on a shelf in the dining room. There was a large flat screen television on the wall and in the corner, a Christmas tree with presents underneath. The furniture in the apartment was a matching set and seemed to be newer and of good quality. Becky exhibited a sense of pride on

her apartment and her belongings and stated she had just purchased the furniture the week before.

Becky offered the researcher a seat on the couch and pulled the coffee table close to them. She offered the researcher a glass of water and asked if the researcher would like anything else. Becky took a seat at the other end of the couch and placed her feet up on the cushion. She was very hospitable and seemed very at ease in her surroundings and with the researcher's presence.

During the interview, Becky seemed very content and solicitous in her responses. She was unwavering when talking about the educators in her life. While Becky was confident in her responses to the interview questions, she did not elaborate extensively. During the card sort activity however, Becky was very outspoken about the cards she was choosing. She had no hesitation and completed the activity with ease.

### **Sarah**

Sarah chose to meet in a conference room adjacent to her place of work on the campus she attends. She stated that since students were on holiday break, we would not be interrupted and the room would be quiet and private at this time of day. The interview was to start at 3:30 p.m., the time Sarah was on her break from her on campus job. The researcher arrived at 3:20 p.m. and Sarah promptly walked through the door of the conference room at 3:30 p.m. Sarah was very direct as she walked up to the researcher, extended her hand to shake, and stated she was ready to begin.

When answering the interview questions, Sarah was very exact and resolute in her responses. While Sarah's answers to the interview questions were complete, they were very short and to the point. Sarah did not expound on any question but was able to answer the

questions thoroughly. While her answers were brief, they provided much rich detail. Sarah was very calm and meticulous in her responses.

During the card sort activity, Sarah was very exact in her choices. She would pick up a card, read the statement then place the card around the large card. Her process was very straightforward and she never deviated from her “system.” Once the card sort activity was completed, Sarah took a moment to look at it then said, “That’s right.”

### **Carol**

Carol was a very energetic and outspoken young lady. The interview was scheduled for 2:30 p.m. on a Wednesday in an office close to Carol’s place of employment. The interview took place between Carol’s classes and the time she needed to be at work. The location of the interview was in a very private office and away from distractions. At the time of the interview, Carol was a full-time college student and employed full-time. Carol shared that she was currently living with her boyfriend in an apartment and they were sharing a vehicle and all the household bills. While she stated that this was a difficult situation at times, things were going well.

She entered the interview room very casually and smiling. She seemed fervent in responding to the interview questions and never hesitated in her responses. Her answers were very thoughtful. She contemplated her responses before answering. During the entire interview, her body language was relaxed and her voice was strong and poised. Carol appeared to be passionate about the information she was providing to the researcher.

### **Rachel**

Rachel was a twenty-year old Hispanic female with a four year-old son. She was available to meet after her workday ended at 6:30 p.m. The interview took place at Rachel’s

apartment in a middle-class neighborhood. The apartment complex had several buildings which seemed to be older and in need of repairs. However, Rachel's two-bedroom apartment was very clean and well kept on the inside. There were several family pictures and pictures of Jesus on the walls and Christmas decorations around the apartment. Nice furniture and a flat screen television were in the living room adjacent to the dining room. The apartment was very well organized with children's toys in baskets around the living room. With pride, Rachel offered the researcher a tour of the entire apartment. Once the tour was completed, Rachel indicated they could sit on the couch in the living room because this would be the "most comfortable."

Rachel disclosed that she lived with her boyfriend, her two sons, her sister, and little brother. Rachel's mother was currently in Guatemala but wanted her children to live in the United States and receive an education. Rachel became teary eyed when she spoke of the absence of her mother. She stated she knew it was hard for her mother to allow her brother and sister to live with them in the United States, but knew this was the best way for them to receive an education. Rachel and her boyfriend agreed to have her sibling to live with them until her mother could return. Rachel worked full-time and attended school part-time while her boyfriend worked full-time and her sister worked full-time to help support all of them. She stated that several times during the conversation that while at times it was hard, they were making it work.

Rachel asked her sister to take her sons and little brother into her bedroom while the interview was conducted. During the interview, Rachel's older son came out of his room twice to get more toys out of the basket and she would smile, pat him on the head, and tell him to return to his room. The pride in her face was obvious when her son came into the living room.

Rachel took time in responding to each interview question. She even asked for clarification on two different occasions. While she did not answer any of the questions at length,

her answers were pensive and thorough. Rachel was very calm during the interview. The researcher could sense the emotion within her when she reflected about the educators in her life during her high school years.

### **Interviews**

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with five volunteers. Volunteers for this portion of the study were recruited from the initial quantitative phase of the study. Participants whom completed the online questionnaire volunteered to participate in the face-to-face interview and card sort activity of the study. All participants were female and had graduated from high school within the last two years. One respondent was African-American, two respondents were Hispanic, and the two remaining participants were Caucasian. Four of the respondents attended high school in a large suburban area while one attended a small high school in a small rural town. Four out of the five respondents attended a large community college and one attended a private all women's university. Both institutions were in a Midwestern city.

While the researcher allotted between thirty minutes and one hour to complete the interviews, a few of the interviews were of a short duration. The short duration of the interviews can be attributed to the researcher's reluctance to infringe on the busy lives of the respondents. Also, indications from the participants were that they had much to do. When the interviews were scheduled, all of the participants made direct statements about them having a hard time finding time to actually do the interview. One participant had to schedule the interview at her work during her lunch hour due to the lack of free time she had available. One of the participants who was a teen mom stated she was only available after work and before class one day during the week.

While the interviews were comprehensive they were not particularly conversational. All of the participants worked either part-time or full-time and attended school part-time or full-time. Two participants were mothers, one a single mother. The participants already had so much demand on their time, the researcher felt hesitant to expect them to devote more time to the interview for which they volunteered.

Face-to-face interviews probed for greater understanding of resiliency and the role educators played in helping high school students living in poverty build resilience. To enhance readability, verbatim quotations are used as forms of evidence and explanation in the analysis section of this chapter. They also provide a deeper understanding and are used to give participants a voice. According to Patton (2002), integrating participant quotes as often as possible will increase the richness of their responses. According to Cordon and Sainsbury (2006), quotes from the participants showed the power of their views or the depth of feelings in ways that researcher narration could not.

**Question 1.** *What does resilience mean to you?* In response to this question, respondents spoke about pushing back, rebounding, and overcoming a difficult or tough situation. For example, two of the respondents spoke of their difficult situations being of teen mothers. Another came from a large family where finances were very scarce. Becky stated, “Resilience means to me someone that can, um, resist anything. Overcome a hard situation.” Sarah replied to this question by answering, “Like when you are not doing good and there’s someone that helps you be better.” Rachel, a teen mother, answered, “Resilience means to me, um, someone that is strong, someone that has a situation, a bad situation in life. You know, overcome whatever difficult situation they’re in.”



**Question 2.** *What characteristics do you think resilient people display?* Susan responded by saying resilient people are independent because they do not like people to know certain things about them. Carol spoke about strength and will power and Sarah said, “I mean usually positive, uplifting, I would say stubbornness.”

**Question 3.** *Please describe the characteristics or practices of the educators in your life that provided support for you during your high school education.* Susan was very direct in her response to this question. She answered, “Oh my God, I could name so many names off. I feel like the district period, is hands on when it comes to helping children. Um, once they find out a problem, there’s like there’s like there is no end until there is a solution.” Becky spoke about one person specifically when saying, “I had one teacher, she would always push me for something better, she would always be on my back about everything and just encourage me to do way better and always be there for me and help me with any situation I had.”

Sarah stated there was an educator at her high school that was positive and would give her the logical consequences if she did not get something done. Carol spoke of a guidance counselor that her sister also had before and stated:

It’s a family thing at school. I grew up with a lot of kids in my family and so I would say an example of that, one of many would be just, them always being on my butt about my grades, making sure I was always going to class, that I was doing my homework, that I was doing what I needed to do to be able to know that I could succeed.

Rachel replied, “I had great people that actually pushed me towards getting my high school diploma. I made it with their help, my parents help, they encouraged me into continuing and giving my son a better life.”

**Question 4.** *What qualities do you feel you have that helped you become and maintain your resilience?* Susan replied, “Just what I have been through in life, having to be a young mother and finish school really pushed me, made me come out of my comfort and my shell.” Simply stated, Becky answered, “Reach for higher things and just be strong.” Sarah responded with, “I’m really stubborn and a perfectionist.” Carol’s answer was:

There’s a lot I guess, my stubbornness, definitely, to want to be able to do good.

Knowing that I accomplished something and the feeling of succeeding, is just a very very good feeling and so I’m stubborn to make myself do what I need to do to be able to feel that. I’m a fighter for what I want. I like money. I want to be able to go and do things in my life like go to school and graduate and be able to do a job that I like while making money.

Finally, Rachel responded to this question by stating, “I’m actually a really strong person. Um, I have overcome (*sic*) my fears that made me, you know, just become stronger at life, understanding at life, and mature at a young age.”

**Question 5.** *Anything else on this topic you would like to share?* Susan and Becky did not have anything else to add. Sarah went on to add, “I think the resilient educator kind of, I don’t know if bends, but bends and twists to how the student needs it. If they need a hard ass or if they need someone like super nice all the time. I think that’s what makes them a good resilience educator.” Carol’s additional response was:

I would just say that I don’t think it’s ever too late to have a relationship with someone, they could be in college, and I think that’s awesome that teachers, for the teachers that do want to have a relationship with their students. A lot of people don’t and it’s just kind of

like “you’re my student, once this class is over I don’t care about you any more.” I mean if that is how they want to do it but...

Rachel added:

I would just like to share that you know there are bad situations in life that you just need to learn to overcome it and I mean, there’s a lot of people out there that are willing to help you and you should be really be grateful for that and not take that for granted.

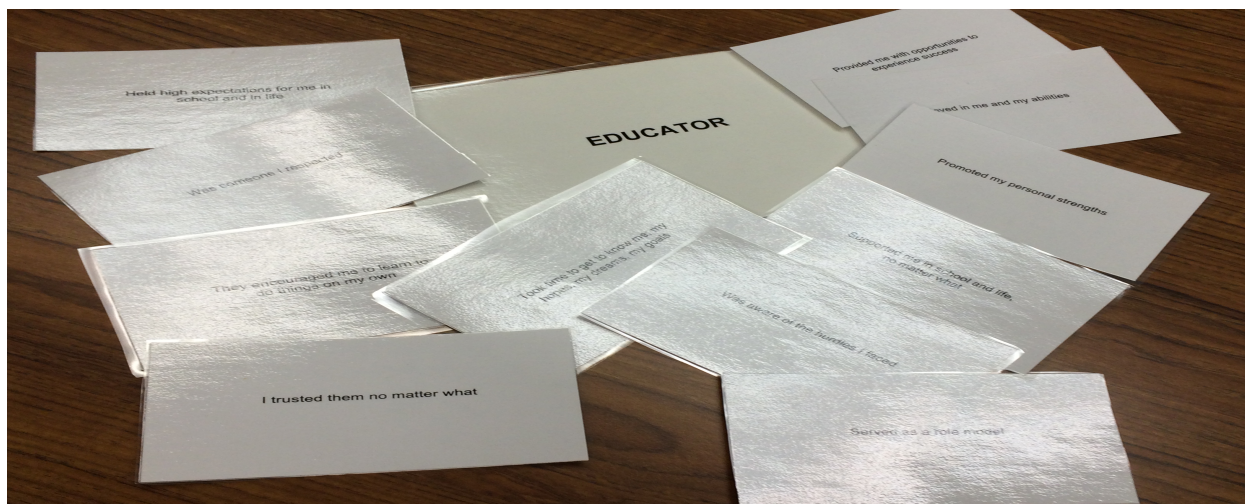
### **Card Sort Activity**

The card sort activity was conducted at the conclusion of the interviews. All participants were given the same instructions and all completed the activity in less than five minutes.

Participants were asked to choose as many or as few of the seventeen small index cards labeled with characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to their ability to build resilience while they were in high school. They were then instructed to randomly place these small cards around the large index card. Once the participant had placed the small cards around the large card, the researcher asked two questions: 1. Why did you choose the statements you did and 2. Tell me more about each of the statements you chose. Once the participant answered the questions, the researcher took a photograph of the completed card sort activity. This concluded the qualitative portion of the study.

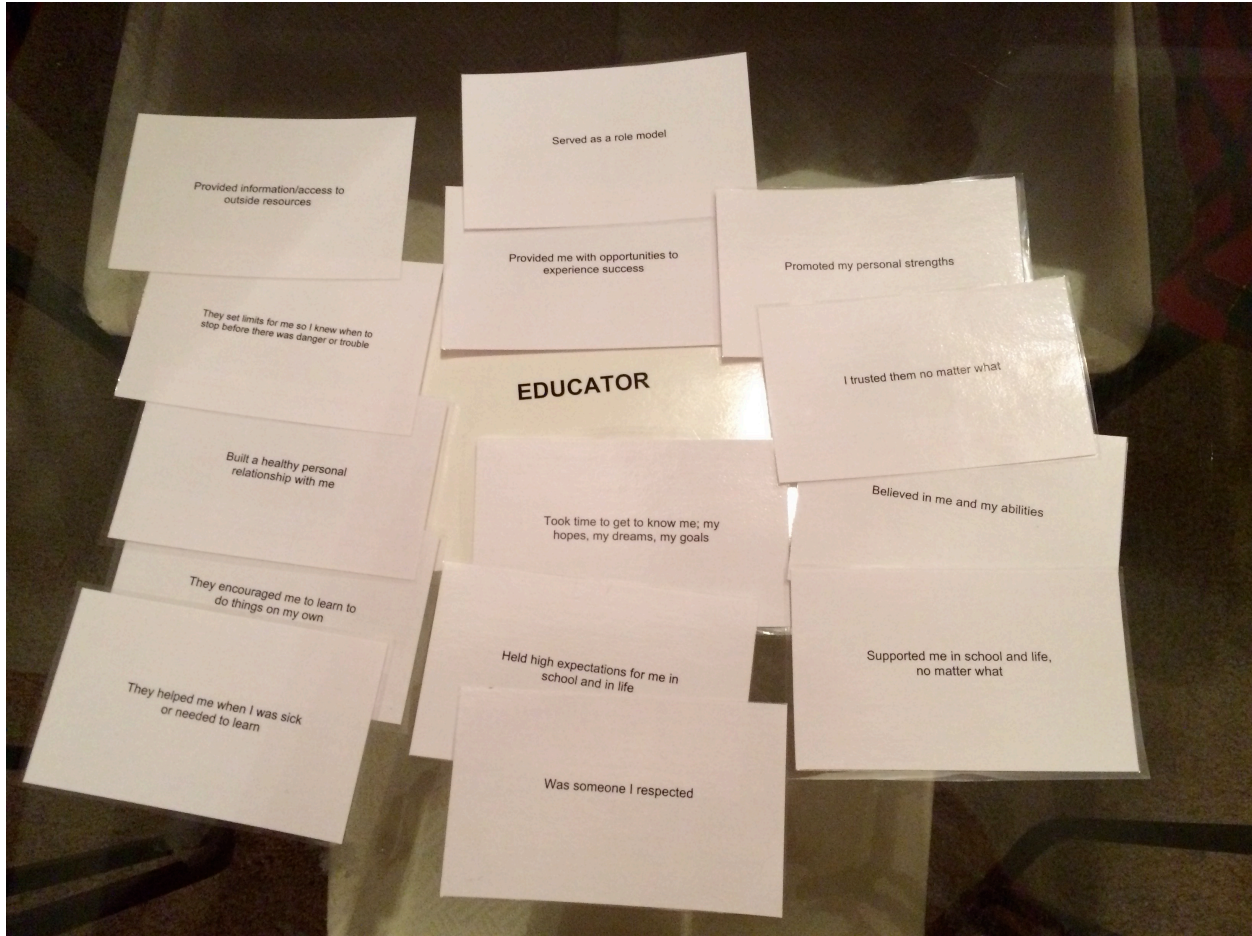
Susan selected 11 out of 17 cards during the card sort activity. Susan’s responses from the online questionnaire and card sort activity were consistent. For example, she chose the card labeled, “held high expectations for me in school and in life” and responded to the questionnaire question “Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future” with “Pretty much true.” Susan also chose the card labeled with the statement, “took time to get to know me; my hopes, my dreams, my goals” and responded to the questionnaire statement, “Who gave me hope

for my life and for my future” with a “Pretty much true” response. Figure 2 is a picture of Susan’s completed card sort activity.



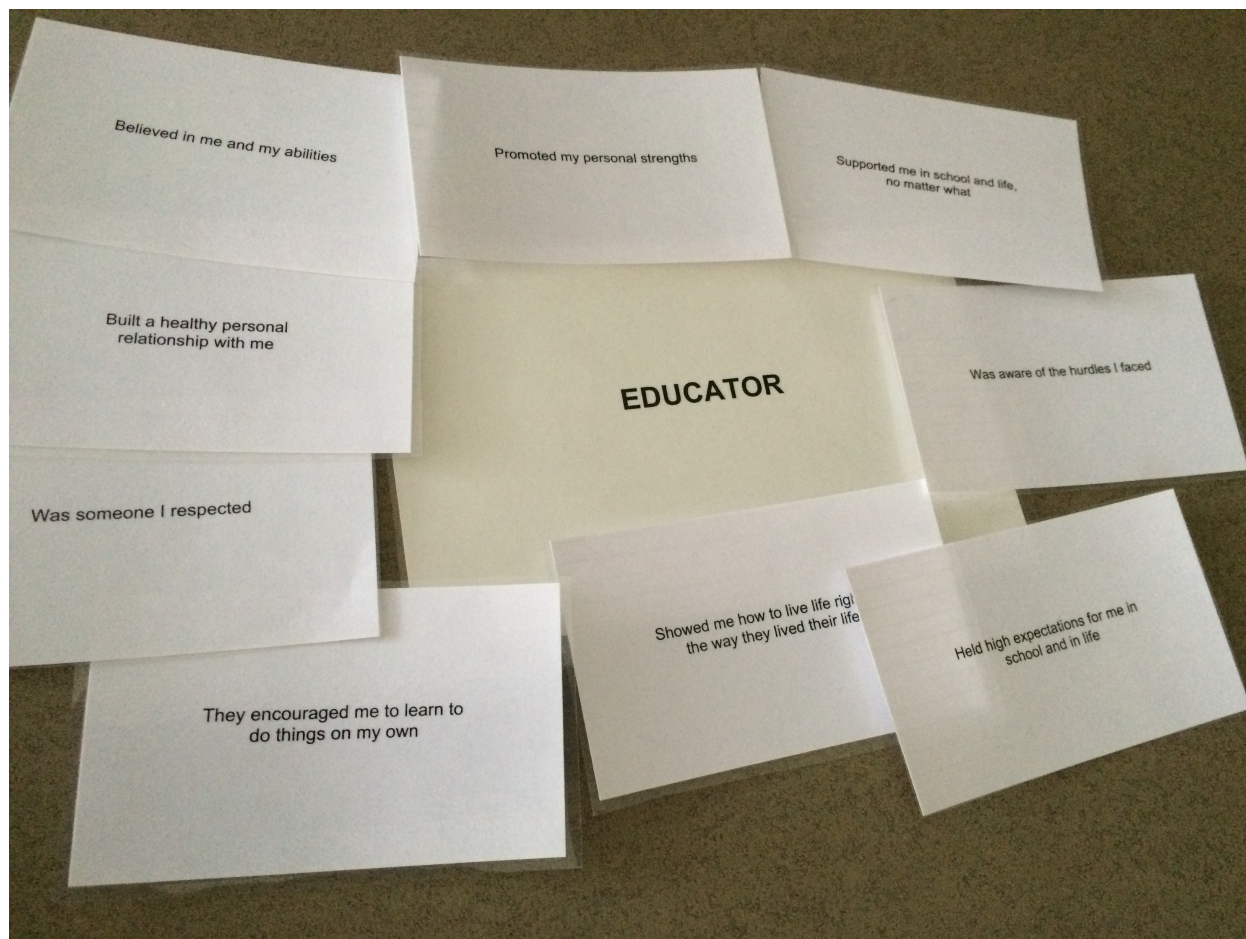
*Figure 1.* Photographed and printed with permission

Becky chose 14 out of the 17 cards that were very consistent in her responses to the interview questions and online questionnaire. Becky chose the “I trusted them no matter what” card during the card sort activity and also rated the statement on the online questionnaire, “Whom I trusted” as, “Pretty much true.” She also chose the “Who believed I would be a success in life” card and rated the statement on the online questionnaire, “Who provided me with opportunities to experience success” with “Very much true.” Figure 3 is the depiction of Becky’s card sort activity.



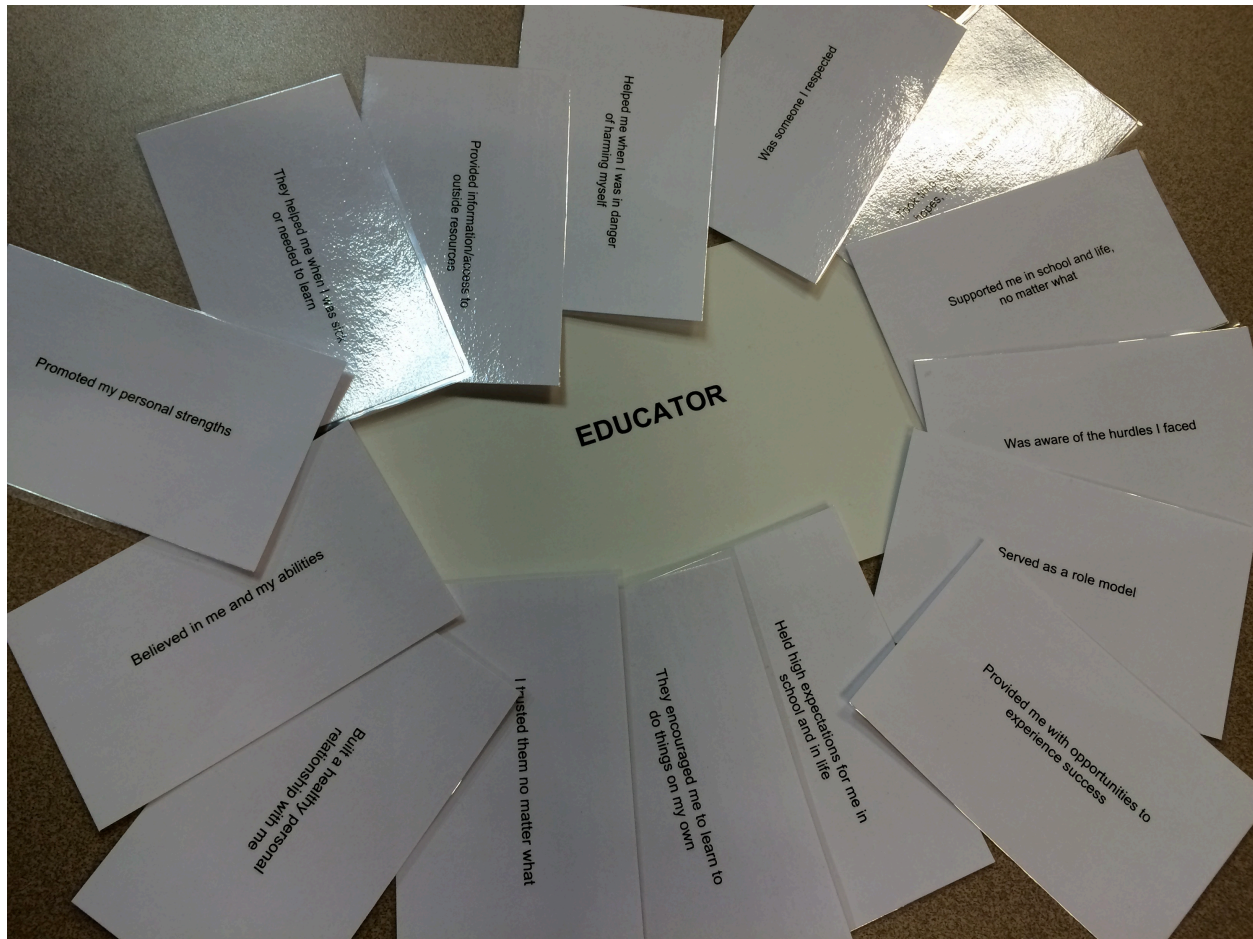
*Figure 3.* Photographed and printed with permission

Sarah picked eight cards during the card sort activity. Sarah's choices during the card sort activity and her responses to the online questionnaire are somewhat incongruent. For example, while she picked the cards labeled with, "promoted my personal strengths," "built a healthy relationship with me," and "believed in me and in my abilities" she stated on the online questionnaire that it was "Not at all true" that she had someone "Who card about me." She also chose the card labeled, "held high expectations for me in school and in life" but responded to the online questionnaire statement "Who set high expectations for me in school and for my future" with "A little true." Figure 4 is an image of Sarah's finished card sort.



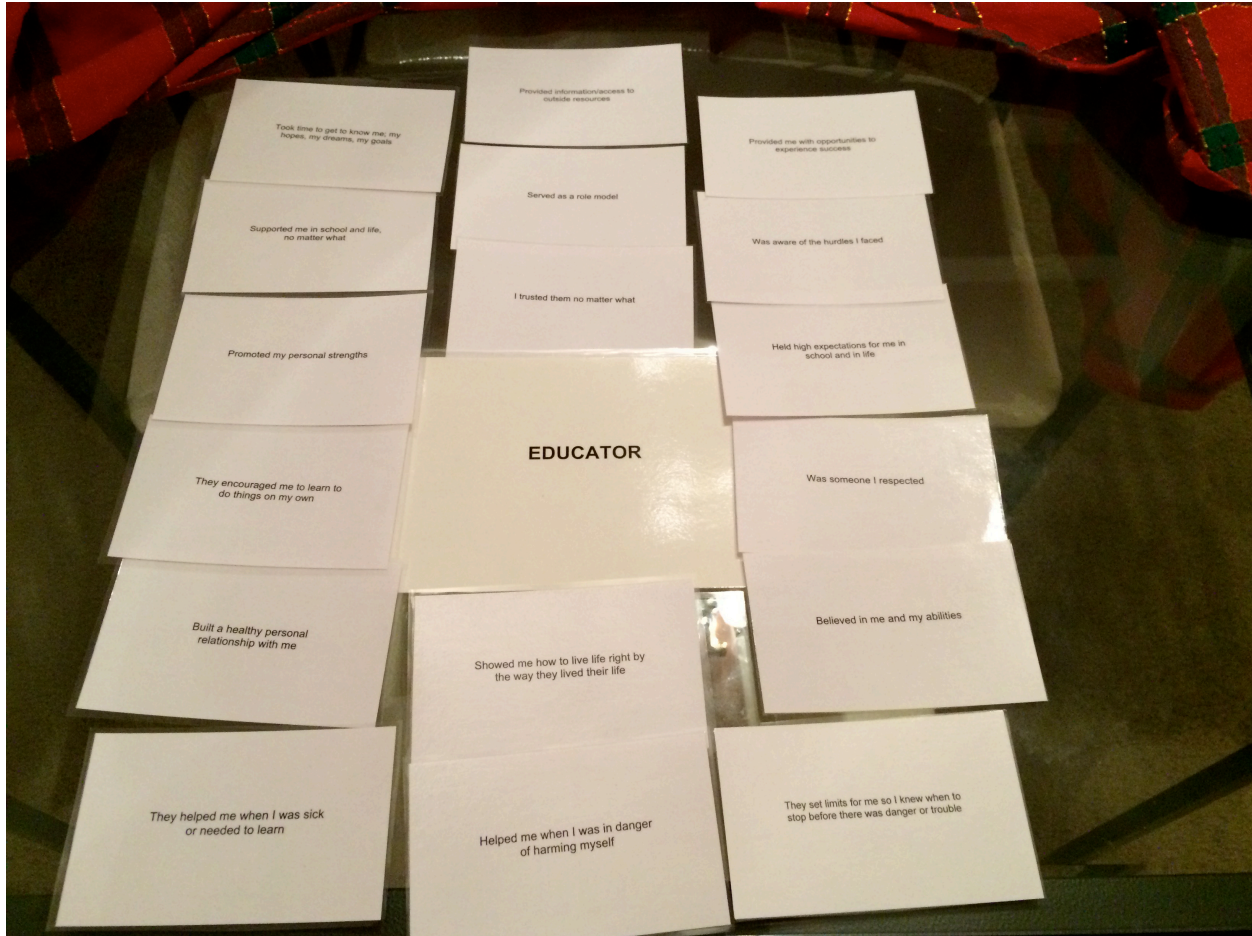
*Figure 4.* Photographed and printed with permission

Out of the 17 options, Carol carefully chose 15 cards in completing the card sort activity. Her responses to the card sort activity were corresponding to her responses on the online questionnaire. She chose the “was aware of the hurdles I faced” card and also responded to the online questionnaire statement, “Who noticed when I was upset about something” with “Pretty much true.” She also chose the card labeled, “supported me in school and life, no matter what” and answered the online questionnaire statement “Who always wanted me to do my best in everything I tried” with “Very much true.” Figure 5 is an image of Carol’s finalized card sort.



*Figure 5.* Photographed and printed with permission

Rachel selected all 17 cards in completing the card sort activity stating she could relate to all of them. She giggled as she continued to place the small cards around the large card. She read each card carefully and seemed to recall a reason for why she was choosing the card, but would not elaborate. She chose the “I trusted them no matter what” card and also responded to interview question number two; What characteristics do resilient people display, by saying “someone you trust in, have a lot of trust in.” Rachel also selected the “Was aware of the hurdles I faced” card and spoke of educators in her life that knew she was teen mom. Figure 6 is a depiction of Rachel’s finished card sort.



*Figure 6.* Photographed and printed with permission

A moderated card sort was utilized in this research study (Righi, et al., 2013). During a moderated card sort activity, the researcher observes the participants while they are actively performing the card sort. This allows the researcher to witness the extent of the participant's effort and confidence as they sort the cards in real time (Righi, et al., 2013). For example, the researcher is able to see if the participant moves cards they are unsure about to the back of the stack and continue on with other cards or asks for clarification. The researcher is also able to listen to any comments the participants make as they complete the activity (Righi et al., 2013). The results from the card sort activity indicate positive results. Table 10 represents the results of the card sort activity.



Table 10 Card Sort Activity

Statements on Cards	Cards selected by Participant
They set limits for me so I knew when to stop before there was danger or trouble	Becky, Rachel
Held high expectations for me in school and in life	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
They helped me when I was sick or needed to learn	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
Served as a role model	Susan, Becky, Carol, Rachel
Was aware of the hurdles I faced	Susan, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
Built a healthy relationship with me	Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
They encouraged me to learn to do things on my own	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
Promoted my personal strengths	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
Showed me how to live life right by the way they lived their life	Sarah, Rachel
Believed in me and in my abilities	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
Provided information/access to outside resources	Becky, Carol, Rachel
Provided me with opportunities to experience success	Susan, Becky, Carol, Rachel
I trusted them no matter what	Susan, Becky, Carol, Rachel
Was someone I respected	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel
Helped me when I was in danger of harming myself	Carol, Rachel
Took time to get to know me; my hopes, my dreams, my goals	Susan, Becky, Carol, Rachel
Supported me in school and life, no matter what	Susan, Becky, Sarah, Carol, Rachel

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

This explanatory mixed-methods study was to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. Werner (1990) stated that resilient students were able to successfully adapt and adjust rapidly to major life events. Through face-to-face interviews and a card sort activity, the qualitative

portion of this study pursued what characteristics and practices educators displayed that helped high school students living in poverty build resilience.

This study was conducted at two institutions of higher education in a Midwestern city and included opinions and insights of college students. The respondents all lived in poverty while in high school but were able to build and maintain their resilience and attend college after high school. Their insights and opinions directly relate to the central research question for this research study. The responses from the participants were used to determine if obvious themes emerged to shed light on the central research question: What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty build resilience? Through coding, the researcher identified five major themes derived directly from responses to the interview questions and card sort activity.

### **Themes**

#### **Educators helped participants to utilize their personal stubbornness or strength**

Theme one identified by the researcher stated that educators helped participants to utilize their personal stubbornness or strength. According to Merriam-Webster.com (2015), stubborn means to be fixed or set in purpose or opinion. The definition of strong is: having force of character, will, morality, or intelligence (Merriam-Webster.com, 2015). The majority of respondents expressed the idea of being stubborn or strong in their responses to interview questions number one, number two, and number four. This theme was derived from the responses to these questions. Question number one was: What does resilience mean to you? Question number two was: What characteristics do resilient people display. Question number four asked: What qualities do you feel you have that helped you become and maintain your resilience? All five participants in this study made statements directly related to the word

“stubborn” or “strong.” Susan said, “Being a teen mom and getting back into school, that was a good time for me to be strong.” Simply stated by Rachel, “Someone that is strong.” Becky responded to question number two by stating: “They would be stubborn.” Sarah responded to question number four by declaring, “I’m really stubborn.”

### **Educators helped participants to overcome a bad or difficult situation**

Interview questions numbers one, two, and five correlated with the second theme identified by the researcher as educators helped participants to overcome a bad or difficult situation. Participants referenced bad or difficult situations in their lives such as having a baby as a teenager and coming from a large family and growing up “poor.” Carol stated “Resilience, I guess means to go from one bad situation and turn it into something good” in response to question number one: What does resilience mean to you?

When answering question number five: Is there anything else on this topic you would like to share? Rachel indicated “I would just like to share that you know there are bad situations in life that you just need to learn to overcome it and I mean there’s a lot of people out there that are willing to help you and you should be really grateful for that and not take that for granted.” In answering question number two, What characteristics do resilient people display? Susan responded, “Getting back into school was a challenge but I did it.”

Cards selected by participants during the card sort activity also related to these interview questions. Four out of five participants chose the card labeled “was aware of the hurdles I faced.” Two of the same participants that chose the previous card also chose the card “helped me when I was in danger of harming myself” during the card sort activity.

**Educators helped participants push toward a goal**

The third theme, educators helped participants push toward a goal, was associated with questions one, three, and four. Question number one asked: What does resilience mean to you? Susan said, “To push back. Like when I entered back into the school district after having my son.” In response to question number three: Please describe the characteristics or practices of the educators in your life that provided support for you during your high school education, Becky revealed, “I had one teacher, she would always push me for something better. She would always be on my back about everything.” She also mentioned in answering question number four: What qualities do you feel you have that helped you become better and maintain your resilience? “I mean, being a better person and trying to be better and reach for higher things.” This theme also was identified through the card sort activity. All five participants chose the card labeled: “held high expectations for me in school and in life.”

**Educators were encouraging**

The fourth theme identified by the researcher was educators were encouraging. All five participants spoke about encouragement when answering question number three: Please describe the characteristics or practices of the educators in your life that provided support for you during your high school education. Becky reported, “They encouraged me to do way better.” Sarah described an educator that, “they were very positive and encouraged me to get things done.” In looking at the responses during the card sort activity, all participants chose the card that included the phrase “they encouraged me to learn to do things on my own.”

**Educators built relationships with participants**

The researcher identified the last theme; educators built healthy relationships with participants, through interview questions number two and five. During the face-to-face

interview, Rachel responded to question number two, “What characteristics do resilient people display” with, “They show you that you know you can come to them, whenever, they’re just there for you 24/7, whenever you need them.” Becky reported, “They were always there for me.” When asked, “Is there anything else you would like to share on this topic,” Carol stated that “educators that build relationships with students is awesome.” The card sort activity also revealed that four out of five participants chose the “built a healthy relationship with me” card.

Four out of five participants who chose the “built a healthy relationship with me” card also chose the card labeled; “took time to get to know me; my hopes, my dreams, my goals.” These four participants spoke about an educator that took time to get to know them and to really find out about what they wanted in life. The relationships these educators built with their students were invaluable in their ability to build resilience.

### **Results and Analysis Summary**

The findings in chapter four emerged from the data gathered from an online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity. During the quantitative phase of this study, participants responded to an online questionnaire related to resilience and the practices and characteristics of educators. The online questionnaire was an adapted version of the California Healthy Kids Survey (WestEd, 2013).

For the qualitative phase of this study, five young women, who qualified for free and reduced lunch during high school and who were currently attending college, volunteered to participate in face-to-face interviews and the card sort activity. Field notes were also prepared during the face-to-face interviews to add depth to the findings. The private responses of the participants during the interview, information from the field notes, and subsequent card sort activity shaped the identified themes. Despite a moderately small sample size, valuable insight

into the central research question was achieved. The primary themes that emerged in this research study were addressed by multiple participants in multiple avenues and thus met saturation. The five main themes identified were: being stubborn or strong, overcoming a bad or difficult situation, pushing toward a goal or reaching for something higher, encouragement, and building relationships.

The field notes completed during each face-to-face interview provided the researcher with insight into the participants' lives and added to the analysis of the quantitative data and other qualitative data collected. The information in the field notes reinforced the concept of resilience by allowing the researcher to see into the lives of the participants. Becky was living in her own apartment. She had become self-sufficient and was able to furnish her apartment with the material goods she needed and those extra items she wanted for pleasure. She was working at a fast food restaurant full time and attending college.

Rachel and Carol were living with their boyfriends in their own apartments. They were both working full-time and attending college. They were not relying on family members to help support them financially and were proud of this accomplishment. Their apartments were furnished very nicely and it was obvious they took pride in their homes. Personal photos on their walls, their personal decorations, and their clean and organized environments helped reinforce the fact that these young ladies were resilient. They had overcome an adverse situation in their lives, such as living in poverty, and have moved forward.

While Susan was living at home with her son and her mother, she was still very self-sufficient. She worked part-time at the day care her son attended and was attending college. She had purchased her own car and was very proud of this fact. She was very well dressed and it was clear she took pride in her appearance. Finally, Sarah spoke of the fact that she was able to get

into a small private college on her own and help support herself by working on campus. The in-depth field notes taken by the researcher added to the overall analysis of the data collected and provided valuable information into helping the researcher identify the five themes.

Participants reviewed transcripts of their own face-to-face interview and card sort activity. To further validate the findings in this research study, triangulation was applied. According to Thurmond (2001), triangulation is the combination of at least two or more methodological approaches, data sources, or data analysis methods. The purpose in using triangulation in research is to increase the ability of the researcher to interpret the findings in a study and to decrease the deficiencies a single strategy can have (Thurmond, 2001). In this research study, data collection was obtained in three methods: an online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, and a card sort activity. Data analysis was completed by looking for consistencies among the data collected in the online questionnaire and interview questions, the online questionnaire and card sort activity, the card sort activity and interview questions, and the interview questions and online questionnaire. Chapter five will include a comprehensive discussion of the findings, significance, and recommendations made by the researcher for further research.

## Chapter Five: Discussion and summary

### **Research Question and Interpretation**

The purpose of this study was to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. The researcher explored the perceptions and opinions of five women regarding the purpose. Analysis of the data focused on the role educators played in the lives of these young women. As previously stated in the review of literature, studies have found schools can nurture resiliency among a broad range of children, including those living in poverty (Croninger, 1991).

The use of an online questionnaire (Appendix A), face-to-face interviews (Appendix B), field notes, and card sort activity (Appendix C) proved to be very beneficial to the researcher. The responses provided by the participants during each of these activities provided insight into the role educators played in helping high school students living in poverty build resilience. Five major themes were identified through data collection and analysis. The major themes are: 1) Educators helped participants to utilize their personal stubbornness or strength, 2) Educators helped participants to overcome a bad or difficult situation, 3) Educators helped participants push toward a goal, 4) Educators were encouraging, and 5) Educators built relationships with participants.

Analysis of the data resulted in identification of five major themes. These themes related the characteristics and practices of educators who helped the participants, who lived in poverty while in high school, to build resilience. Their ability to build resilience led to their completion of high school and subsequent enrollment in college. Comparison of the characteristics and practices of educators, reported by the participants, explained the roles the educators played in the lives of the five young women who participated in the study. Figure 7 represents the



connection between the role educators played in their ability to build resilience while in high school and living in poverty.

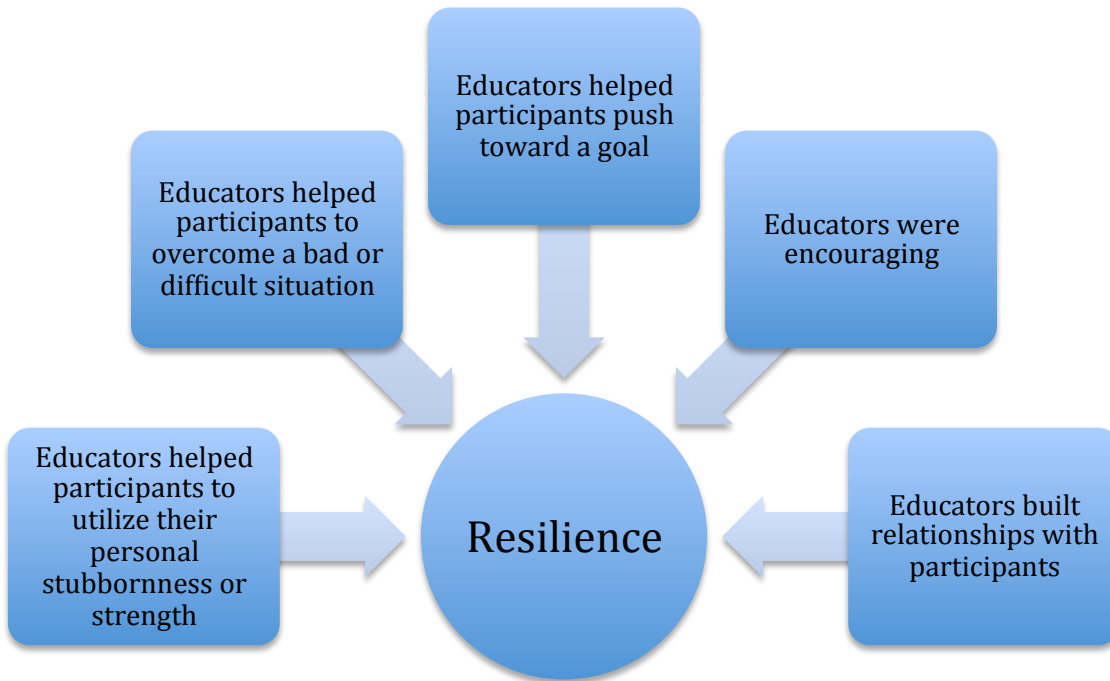


Figure 7. Themes and Their Relationship to the Role of Educators and Resilience

**Interpretation of the Results**

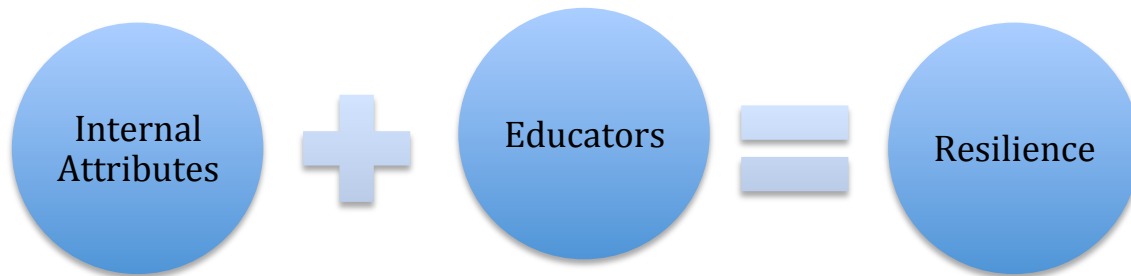
**Educators Helped Participants to Utilize Their Personal Stubbornness or Strength**

The majority of respondents described resilient people as stubborn and strong. Often time resilient people are seen as being stubborn since they do not give up. The participants in this study all dealt with adverse situations in their lives and described themselves as stubborn because they did not give up. They continued to move forward even though they had to deal with difficult situations at some point in during high school.

Again, participants spoke of their stubbornness and being a “fighter.” Susan shared she had to become comfortable to come out of her shell and make tough life choices at a young age due to being a teenage mother. Sarah mentioned she felt that being a perfectionist helped her become resilient. She always wanted to do the best at everything she attempted. These are

examples of internal attributes essential in the ability of children to build resilience (Benard, 2007).

According to Gizir (2009), these internal factors are qualities and characteristics related to positive developmental outcomes. These internal attributes include; skills, attitudes, beliefs, and values which individuals possess (Gizir, 2009). Henderson (2013) also includes; having a sense of self worth, being assertive, and possessing impulse control when discussing internal positive attributes. These are all vital attributes that help children build resilience (Henderson, 2013). These internal attributes, along with external supports, such as a supportive educator, helps reduce the effects of any adverse situation a child may encounter in life (Boman & Russo, 2007). Figure 8 shows the relationship between internal attributes and educators.



*Figure 8.* Internal Attributes and Educators

### **Educators Helped Participants to Overcome a Bad or Difficult Situation**

Responses to the first interview question led to the development of the theme, educators helped participants to overcome a bad or difficult situation. Participants discussed being able to move from a bad situation and turn it into something good. They all expressed the idea of being strong and having the ability to overcome adverse situations in their lives. These replies align

with this study's definition of resilience: the tendency to rebound, spring back or having the power to recover (Garmezy, 1991).

Two of the participants discussed being teen mothers and having the ability within themselves and the support from others to graduate from high school. Teen pregnancy rates in the United States are the highest rates among developed countries (Hamilton & Ventura, 2012). Continuing to be a concern are teen birth rates with the United States rates that remain at a rate of nine times higher than other developed nations. Teenagers who become mothers are at higher risk of dropping out of school. Difficulty finding transportation, lack of adequate childcare, and an absence of family support are examples of reasons that teen mothers may not complete high school (Luttrell, 2003).

High school dropouts are more likely to: live in poverty, be unemployed, have lower-paying jobs, live on public assistance, serve time in prison, or be physically unhealthy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Only about half of teen mothers earn their high school diploma before the age of 22. This is compared to 89% of non-parenting teens (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2012). Teen mothers who had a child before the age of 18 are 38% less likely to not graduate from high school.

Carol spoke of growing up "poor" with a lot of children in her family. To these participants, living in poverty and being a teen mother, were very difficult situations. It would have been easier for them to give up and lose hope. According to Walsh (2003) hope is essential in the building of resilience. Hope allows a person to believe in a better future and this goal can be attained (Snyder, 2000). According to Shane Lopez (2013), there is a 12% increase in school outcomes when a student has hope.

### **Educators Helped Participants Push Toward a Goal**

In identifying the theme, educators helped participants push toward a goal, Rachel spoke of being a teen mother. She gave an example of an educator in her life who pushed her towards getting her high school diploma. This person really pushed her to give her son a better life. Another participant, Carol, discussed the feeling of “family” she had at her high school. She talked about a guidance counselor and homeroom teacher that was always “on my butt” to get her work done. The participants made it clear they would not be where they are today without the *push* some of the educators in their lives gave them.

This *push* connects to the protective factors necessary in helping children at-risk build resilience. These factors included internal attributes and external supports. One external support that naturally helps students build their resilience can be an educator (Henderson, 2013). Educators can help through conversations with students and providing a safe place for them to cultivate their self-esteem and push them to develop good reasoning skills (Benard, 2007).

Students are excited about their personal goals that help them see promising futures for themselves (Lopez, 2013). To help students set goals for themselves, educators need to make sure their present activities prepare them for their futures. This is attained through educators knowing their students well enough to know their dreams for their future and how to amply motivate them towards these goals (Lopez, 2013).

### **Educators Were Encouraging**

In building hope, it is important to encourage children to share their dreams and goals and to encourage them to think about their future in a positive way (Grotberg, 1993). Susan spoke to this theme when she said there were many names she could recall that were very encouraging to her while she was in high school. When asked who they were, she listed a guidance counselor,

principal, and two specific teachers. She said her district was great when it came to helping her achieve her goal of becoming a high school graduate even after becoming a teen mom. All five participants chose the “encouraged me to learn to do things on my own” card during the card sort activity as well.

### **Educators Built Relationships with Participants**

Educators that are willing and able to connect with students by building healthy and positive relationships with their students help them build resilience (Downey, 2008). While Carol talked about having both experiences with professors in her interview, she focused on the positive experiences. She had some educators that took time to build a relationship with her and other educators that did not seem to care. Carol said she did not think it was ever too late for a teacher to build a relationship with a student, even in college. She had encountered teachers that gave the impression that once the class she was in with them was over they did not care about her any more.

Participants in this study indicated that trust and respect were crucial in the relationship they had with educators helped them build resilience. Carol spoke about the trust she had in educators in her life to help her solve any problem she had. Another participant, Sarah, respected the educators in her life because she knew they cared about her and were flexible in how they worked with her. When she needed a more caring approach, they offered that and when she needed a “hard ass” (strict, task-master) approach, they offered that as well. Building a relationship between educators and students includes mutual trust and respect (Brooks, 2006).

### **Implications**

As previously mentioned in the literature review, the number of children living in poverty continues to grow. According to the Children’s Defense Fund (2012), there are currently 16.1

million children living in poverty in the United States. Of these, 7.2 million are living in extreme poverty. Children living in poverty are at risk of completing fewer years of school and earning low wages as adults (The Whole Child, 2013). These children depend heavily on the supports available to them in their communities, and most importantly, their schools. In order to help children living in poverty become successful in school and close the achievement gap between children living in poverty and those who are not, educators must be aware of the differences in their lives (Payne, 1996).

This study shows the importance of the role educator's play in the lives of students. One way educators can help students become successful, is to help them build their resiliency. Werner (1990) states that resilient students were able to adapt and adjust swiftly to major life events with success. The results from this study present the many characteristics and practices educators exhibit that help high school students living in poverty build resilience. Responses from the online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive in nature. The majority of respondents indicated that there were educators in their lives who cared about them, set high expectations for them, and wanted them to be the best in everything they tried.

A recent article written by Susan Dynarski (2015) discusses the inequalities in education in the United States. For children living in a poor family, there is only a 9% chance that they will earn a college degree. Their peers from high-income families however, have a 54% chance of earning a college degree. The participants in this study were all college students who plan to reach their goal of attaining a college degree.

The face-to-face interviews also indicated positive results. Respondents discussed educators who pushed them for something better, encouraged them, and supported them in several different ways. The respondents also stated that they had educators who were positive

and solution focused which in turn helped them build their resiliency. The outcome of the card sort activity also signified the important role educators played in the ability for high school students in poverty build resilience.

### **Recommendations for Educators**

First and foremost, it is imperative that educators take the time to build positive relationships with students. Positive and healthy relationships can be built through open communication between educators and students. Conversations can revolve around the students' academic progress, extra-curricular activities, or their lives in general. When educators take time to really get to know a student on an individual level, they are able to build an understanding of the lives of their students. This understanding can help the educator to make connections between the students' personal struggles and how these struggles impact their daily lives at school. Educators who take the time to get to know students on a personal level provides them with the opportunity to feel as if someone cares about them as a person. This positive relationship also helps build trust between the student and educator.

Teacher education programs also need to offer prospective educators multiple opportunities to learn the core skills necessary to help students in poverty build resilience. According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2001), these skills are referred to as dispositions. These dispositions are the “values, commitments and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities that affect student learning, motivation, and development as well as the educator's own professional growth.” It is no longer enough for educators to just be an experts in their curricular areas. They also need to be able to identify and practice the personal skills necessary to support students, especially at-risk students.

Educators must hold all students to the same high expectations. Students living in poverty do not want educators who do not feel they can achieve at the same level as their peers from a higher socio-economic status. At-risk students adverse situations are not an excuse for them not to have to work hard in school, it is simply an explanation of the struggles they may have that their peers do not.

Students living in poverty need educators that are willing to communicate openly and frequently with them. They need to feel that someone is invested in who they are as persons. Also, teacher education programs must teach more than curriculum. Potential educators need to learn about themselves and what impacts students learning. Becoming aware of these dispositions and practicing them in the classroom will help educators encourage students in poverty to achieve their goals. Setting high expectations for all students is critical for success, especially for at-risk students. Students living in poverty do not need or want to feel like educators are making excuses for them. They want to be held to the same high standard as their peers. The role of the educator is fundamental in the ability of students living in poverty to build resilience.

### **Limitations of this Study**

Limitations are used to identify potential weaknesses of a study (Creswell, 2012). One limitation involved with this research is the generalizability of the study. This study cannot be generalized to the population at large. It is possible for this study to be generalized to a larger Midwestern urban population with similar demographics however. Two central limitations relating to generalizability of this study involved the small sample size and the gender of the participants. With only young women volunteering to participate in the study, the data became limited in its scope. The perspectives of the five female participants can be thought of as a



representative sample of the geographical area where the study took place, but not of young women across the nation.

Another limitation with this study was the age range of participants. All participants were between the ages of 19 and 21 years. The researcher chose this age range due to the difficulty in gaining access to participants under the age of consent, which is 19. To obtain permission to use participants under the age of 19, guardian consent would have needed to be obtained and this presented a challenge for the researcher. Participants older than 21 years of age were not selected because of recall purposes. Participants older than 21 years of age were not selected due to the longer length of time they were out of high school. The researcher pursued more recent high school graduates who might have the ability to recall their high school experiences more accurately than those who had graduated more than three to four years previously.

The researcher was cognizant of the busy lives the participants lived. This played into the lack of probing questions asked by the researcher. The researcher did not want to intrude on the little spare time the participants did have. Finally, research bias was also a limitation to this research study. The researcher was a school counselor working with high school students living in poverty. An attempt was made to assure the interview questions were written in such a way as to eliminate research bias.

While saturation was obtained and several themes were identified from the data collected through the use of the on-line questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity, the small number of participants limited the study's credibility. The data collected from the three methods did allow the researcher to identify five themes and provide for saturation.

The opportunity for the researcher to probe deeper into the participant's responses could have added information to the data collected.

### **Future Research**

While interacting with the participants, the researcher was struck by their eagerness and honesty in answering the interview questions and completing the card sort activity. In each part of the study, participants expressed the importance of the role educators played in their lives that helped them build resilience. Examples from this study show that educators who were aware of the hurdles these students faced, encouraged them, and promoted their personal strengths were vital for students living in poverty to build resilience. Further research that focuses on these and other specific characteristics and practices of educators is recommended.

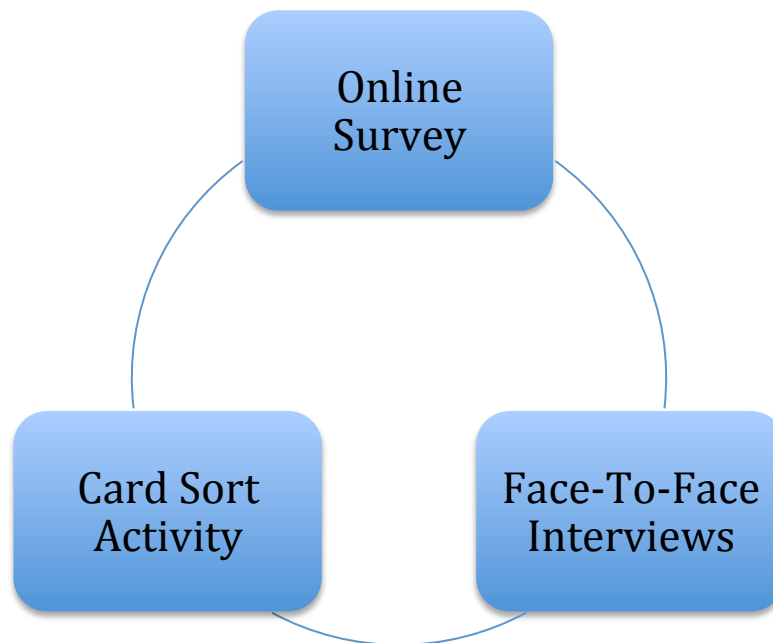
Further research that focuses on improving education and training for educators who work with students in poverty might provide more insight into working with these students. Teacher education programs can encourage future educators to get to know their students on a personal level. Teacher education programs can encourage prospective educators to volunteer to sponsor a club, work athletic events, or simply ask their students to share something personal about them can accomplish this. Educators can also talk to students about their part-time jobs, hobbies, or interests. Future educators need to be urged to take time during the school day to get to know their students as a whole. Educators that do will begin to understand the difference in working with students in poverty compared to their peers living in a higher socioeconomic status. This will allow for the identification of more specific factors that influence high school graduation rates and future success for these students.

From the interview responses and completed card sort activity, the concept of building healthy relationships emerged. Studying how these positive healthy relationships help promote

resilience in students living in poverty might provide educators with knowledge of how important it is for them to connect with at-risk students. The idea of relationships was described previously in the literature review. Having at least one educator in their lives helps at-risk students to overcome adverse situations they may encounter (Werner, 1990). Research conducted by Werner and Smith (1992), found that the supportive and caring relationships children living in poverty had with their teachers was the most important factor in their ability to succeed. Expanding the age range and number of participants might allow for more opportunities for data collection.

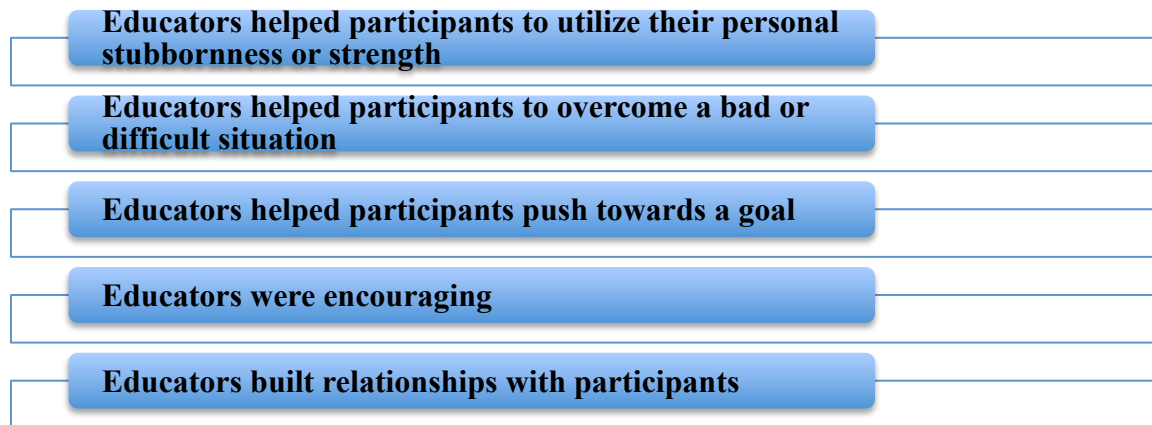
### Summary

The explanatory sequential mixed-methods study with the use of an on-line questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity provided for the gathering of rich, in-depth data. Through triangulation, the researcher achieved deeper and broader understanding of the data. Figure 9 represents the data triangulation for this study.



*Figure 9.* Data Triangulation

This triangulation of data led to the identification of five themes. These themes provided answers to the research question for this study; “What are the characteristics and practices of educators who contribute to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience?”



*Figure 10.* Identified Themes

Participants were eager, outgoing, and honest in their responses in each phase of this study focusing on the role of educators in helping high school students living in poverty build resilience. Five participants shared their lived experiences, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges they faced and the role educators played in supporting them in building their resilience to the adverse situations they faced.

While there is much research on resilience and protective factors related to resilience, this study looked at one specific facet of how students built their resilience. The researcher chose to explore the specific role educators played in helping high school students living in poverty build resilience. This researcher sought to learn what exact characteristics and practices of educators contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience.

After collecting and analyzing data from an on-line questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, and card sort activity, the researcher determined that educator’s characteristics and practices are vital to the ability of high school students living in poverty to build resilience.

While participants stated they possessed stubbornness and saw themselves as strong, an educator helping them utilize these personal traits was important to their ability to achieve their goals.

All five participants had overcome a bad or difficult situation in one way or another. Two were teenage mothers and one came from a large family and lived in poverty. While the other two participants did not state specifically what their bad or difficult situation was, they all spoke of educators who helped them surmount their situations. All participants had graduated from high school and were all attending college.

All participants had an educator in their lives that helped them push toward a goal. Whether their personal goal was to graduate high school and attend college for themselves or to graduate high school so they could provide a better life for their children, they all had an educator that stood behind them and supported them. These five young women all achieved their goal of high school graduation and are all attending college.

Having an educator to encourage them was also important. When things seem bad and life is hard, having someone to be there and cheer one on can be invaluable. Finally, the relationship between a student and educator can be fundamental in the ability for that student to build resilience. This is especially true for students in poverty. Ruby Payne (1996) defines external supports as those people in one's life that offer help when needed. Educators fall into this category. The participants in this study valued the relationships educators built with them and these relationships were fundamental to their success.

The process of collecting data through an online questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, field notes, and card sort activity contributed to the findings in this study. This is especially true for the card sort activity. While the research participants volunteered for the face-to-face interviews, they did not elaborate on their responses. The responses during the card sort activity

enhanced and supported what the participants did say during their interviews. The participant's responses to the online questionnaire and interview questions were reinforced by the responses to the field notes and card sort activity.

The researcher was surprised by the incongruence between Sarah's online responses, face-to-face interview, field notes, and card sort activity answers. Her online questionnaire responses tended to be more negative in nature. Several of her online responses were either "Not at all true" or "Somewhat true" but the responses to her interview questions and card sort activity were all positive in nature. Her card sort responses included, "Was aware of the hurdles I faced," "They encouraged me to learn to do things on my own," and "Supported me in school an life, no matter what." The researcher concluded that for this participant, the online questionnaire was not allowing her to really reflect on educators in her lives like the card sort activity did. Another reason for the discrepancy in her responses could be due to the timing. The time period between when Taylor filled out the online questionnaire and when she conducted her face-to-face interview was a few weeks. In this time period, she may have had time to really reflect upon her experience with educators and when she answered the interview questions, she was able to be more open with her responses.

This study contributed to previous research on the role of educators in helping students in poverty build resilience. The young women who volunteered for this study were eager to participate and wanted their replies to add to this field of study. The multiple methods of data collection proved to be instrumental in identifying themes and reaching saturation. This research study demonstrated the role educators in the lives of children living in poverty and their ability to build resilience is fundamental in their success.

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Appendix A: Online Questionnaire

Qualtrics Survey Software

<https://collegestmary.co1.qualtrics.com/WRQualtricsControlPanel/A...>

**Default Block**

While in high school, I qualified for the Federal Free/Reduced lunch program for at least one year or more.

- Yes
- No

Are you between the ages of 19-21?

- Yes
- No

**Please respond how you feel about each of the following statements.**

The next statements are about what might have occurred at your school with an ADULT other than your parents or guardian.

*At my school, there was an adult.....*

who really cared about me.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

who told me when I did a good job in my classes.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

Qualtrics Survey Software

<https://collegestmary.co1.qualtrics.com/WRQualtricsControlPanel/A...>

who noticed when I was upset about something.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

who believed that I would be a success in life.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

who always wanted me to do my best in everything I tried.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

whom I trusted.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

who set high expectations for me in school and for my future.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

who gave me hope for my life and for my future.

- Not At All True
- A Little True
- Pretty Much True
- Very Much True

I agree to volunteer for the second phase of this study. This phase includes a face-to-face interview and card sort activity which will take approximately one hour to complete.

- Yes
- No

If you selected Yes above, please include your name, email addresses and phone numbers where you can be reached to arrange the interview and card sort activity. Thank you.

Thank you for participating in this research study.

## Appendix B: Interview Questions/Protocol

Time of Interview:

Location of Interview:

Date:

Investigator: Vicki Londer

Research Participant: (use pseudonym)

**Script for investigator**

**Brief description of this research study:** The purpose of this explanatory mixed-methods study is to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience.

**Informed consent:** Your participation in this research study interview is completely voluntary. You may decline to respond to any question at any time during the interview. There is no direct benefit or risk to you in participating in this study. Your privacy will be maintained during the entire length of this study. You may ask questions at any time during the interview and the investigator will answer your questions honestly and thoroughly. Definitions important for you to remember:

**Educator:** For purposes of this study, educators will include classroom teachers, coaches, and any school personnel that work directly with high school students.

**Resilience:** For the purposes of this study, the definition of resiliency is: the tendency to rebound, spring back, or having the power to recover (Garmezy, 1991).

For this portion of the study, you will simply answer four semi-structured questions and one open ended question. Do you have any questions? Do you give your consent to participate in this research study interview and card sort activity? Please sign the form.

Thank you.

- 1) What does resilience to mean to you?
- 1) What characteristics do resilient people display?
- 2) Please describe the characteristics or practices of the educators in your life that provided support for you during your high school education.
- 3) What qualities do you feel you have that helped you become and maintain your resilience?
- 4) Is there anything else on this topic you would like to share?

Appendix C: Statements on Small Index Cards for Card Sort Activity

They set limits for me so I knew when to stop before there was danger or trouble	Believed in me and in my abilities
Held high expectations for me in school and in life	Provided information/access to outside resources
They helped me when I was sick or needed to learn	Provided me with opportunities to experience success
Served as a role model	I trusted them no matter what
Was aware of the hurdles I faced	Was someone I respected
Built a healthy personal relationship with me	Helped me when I was in danger of harming myself
They encouraged me to learn to do things on my own	Took time to get to know me; my hopes, my dreams, my goals
Promoted my personal strengths	Supported me in school and life, no matter what
Showed me how to live life right by the way they lived their life	

## Appendix D: Letter to Program Directors



September 14, 2014

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ :

My name is Vicki Londer. I am a student at College of Saint Mary in the EdD program under the supervision of Dr. Merryellen Towey-Schulz. I am asking for permission to recruit students on your campus to participate in my research study entitled: **POVERTY AND THE ROLE EDUCATORS PLAY IN BUILDING RESILIENCE AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY.**

The study includes an online questionnaire, face-to-face interview, and card sort activity. It is my hope that this information can identify student perceptions of the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. There are no identified risks from participating in this study. Students will receive a link to the research questionnaire through their program directors or student advisors.

The online questionnaire, interview, and card sort activity will be confidential and anonymous. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and the students may refuse to participate without consequence. During the first phase of the study, participants will complete an online questionnaire, which will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. During the second phase, a face-to-face interview and card sort activity will be conducted and will take approximately one hour to complete. Students will receive no compensation for participating in the research study.

Responses to the questionnaire will only be reported only in aggregated form to protect the identity of respondents. The planned use of results will be to include them in my dissertation and to present them to my dissertation committee. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a locked cabinet for seven years.

Further information regarding the research can be obtained from the principal researcher, Vicki Londer at [VLonder06@csm.edu](mailto:VLonder06@csm.edu) or my dissertation advisor Dr. Merryellen Towey-Schulz, [mschulz@csm.edu](mailto:mschulz@csm.edu), 402-399-2432.

Please let me know the process required for me to obtain permission to recruit students on your campus. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Thank you.

Vicki Londer  
Candidate for EdD  
308-440-8397  
College of Saint Mary  
Omaha, Nebraska

## Appendix E: Letter to Professor/Adjunct Faculty



December 8, 2013

Dear Professor:

My name is Vicki Londer. I am a student at the College of Saint Mary in the EdD program under the supervision of Maryellen Towey-Schulz. I am asking for you to invite your students to participate in a research project entitled: Poverty and the Role Educators Play in Building Resilience. The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. The College of Saint Mary's Institutional Review Board has approved this study.

The following study includes an online questionnaire, face-to-face interview, and a card sort activity and was developed to ask your students questions regarding resilience. It is my hope that this information can identify specific characteristics and practices of educator's that help students in poverty build resilience. There are no identified risks from participating in this study.

The online questionnaire, interview, and card sort activity are confidential and anonymous. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and your students may refuse to participate without consequence. The online questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The face-to-face interview and card sort activity will take 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete. Your students will receive no compensation for participating in the research study.

Responses to the survey will only be reported in aggregated form to protect the identity of respondents. The planned use of results will be to include them in my dissertation paper and to present them to my dissertation committee. Neither the researcher nor the University has a conflict of interest with the results. The data collected from this study will be kept in a locked cabinet for seven years.

To insure safe and proper research procedures, auditors of the College of Saint Mary's Institutional Review Board will be granted direct access to the research data without violating the confidentiality of the participants. Further information regarding the research can be obtained from the principal researcher, Vicki Londer at [VLonder06@csm.edu](mailto:VLonder06@csm.edu) or my faculty advisor Dr. Maryellen Towey-Schulz, [mschulz@csm.edu](mailto:mschulz@csm.edu), 402-399-2432. If you wish further information regarding your student's rights as a research participant, you may contact the College of Saint Mary's Institutional Review Board Administrator, Dr. Vicky Morgan, [VMorgan@csm.edu](mailto:VMorgan@csm.edu), 402-399-2675.

If you would like to know the results of this research, contact Dr. Maryellen Towey-Schulz, [mschulz@csm.edu](mailto:mschulz@csm.edu), 402-399-2432. Thank you for your consideration. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Vicki Londer  
Candidate for EdD  
308-440-8397  
College of Saint Mary  
Omaha, Nebraska

## Appendix F: Letter to Student



September 10, 2014

**TITLE: POVERTY AND THE ROLE EDUCATORS PLAY IN BUILDING RESILIENCE****IRB # CSM 1405**

Dear Student,

You are invited to take part in a research study because you are a student between the ages of 19-21. The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience. This research study will be conducted as part of the requirements for my Doctor of Education program at College of Saint Mary.

You may receive no direct benefit from participating in this study, but the information gained will be helpful to educators, teacher educator programs, and other stakeholders working with children living in poverty. The information from this study will allow them to be better prepared to meet the unique needs of children living in poverty in schools.

Should you decide to participate you will be asked to complete an on-line questionnaire that should take approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. You may also agree to participate in a face-to-face interview, which will take 30 minutes to one hour of your time. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Furthermore, your response or decision not to respond will not affect your relationship with Metropolitan Community College. Please note that your responses will be used for research purposes only and will be strictly confidential. No one at Metropolitan Community College will ever associate your individual responses with your name or email address. The information from this study may be published in journals and presented at professional meetings.

Your completion and submission of the questionnaire indicate your consent to participate in the study. You may withdraw at any time by exiting the survey. This study does not cost the participant in any way, except the time spent completing the survey. There is no compensation or known risk associated with participation. Please read *The Rights of Research Participants* attached to the email message. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the College of Saint Mary Institutional Review Board, 7000 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68144 (402-399-2400).

Thank you sincerely for participating in this important research study. If you have comments, problems or questions about the survey, please contact the researcher.

If you are 19 years of age or older and agree to the above please proceed to:  
[http://collegestmary.col.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_esXw8CmVvOB0nXL](http://collegestmary.col.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_esXw8CmVvOB0nXL) and begin the survey.

Sincerely,

Principal Investigator's name: Vicki Londer

Principal Investigator's Contact Information: [VLonder06@csm.edu](mailto:VLonder06@csm.edu), (402) 440-8397



## Appendix G: Adult Consent Form

**IRB#: CSM 1405****Approval Date: June 2014****Expiration Date: July 2015****Title of this Research Study. POVERTY AND THE ROLE EDUCATORS PLAY IN BUILDING RESILIENCE****Invitation.**

You are invited to take part in the second phase of this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you have any questions, please ask. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students in poverty to build resilience.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?**

You have identified yourself as someone that can identify the characteristics and practices of educators who contributed to the ability of high school students living in poverty to build resilience. By providing resilient students the opportunity to explain their experiences, beliefs, and opinions, educators can be better prepared to support the growing number of students living in poverty in schools.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?**

Students living in poverty start school at a disadvantage compared to their middle and upper class peers. In order to close the achievement gap between those children living in poverty and those not living in poverty, educators need to be aware of the differences. This research is designed to better understand the characteristics and practices that contributed to the ability of students in high school in poverty to build resilience.

**Participant Initials \_\_\_\_\_**

**ADULT Consent Form - PAGE TWO****What will be done during this research study?**

You have agreed and were selected to move to the second phase of the study. This one meeting will include a face-to-face interview and card sort activity. Both of these activities will take approximately one hour to complete. First, the researcher will ask you questions related to your experiences with educators while you were in high school and how you believe their characteristics and practices helped you build resilience.

Second, during the card sort activity, you will be asked to choose small cards labeled with terms of characteristics and practices that educators may have displayed that helped you build resilience and place them around one large card labeled "Educator."

During the face-to-face interview and card sort activity, you will be digitally recorded and a photograph will be taken of your completed card sort.

**What are the possible risks of participating in this research study?**

There are no known risks to you from participating in this research study. There is a possibility that speaking of the topic of poverty may make you feel uncomfortable or upset. If this happens, please tell the researcher so that support resources may be provided to you.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

You are not expected to receive any direct benefit from participating in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

The main benefit to other people is having the ability to identify the characteristics and practices of educators that helped children in poverty build resilience. If educators are able to become aware of these two areas, they will be better suited in helping more children high school build resilience.

**What are the alternatives to participating in this research study?**

You choose not to participate.

**What will participation in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Participant Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADULT Consent Form - PAGE THREE****Will you be paid for participation in this research study?**

You will not be paid or compensated for participation in this research study.

**What should you do if you have a concern during this research study?**

Your well-being is the major focus of the researcher. If you have a concern as a direct result of participating in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the end of this consent form.

**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your responses. A pseudonym will be utilized instead of your real name to ensure your personal responses and any other information you give during face-to-face interview and card sort activity are not identifiable in any way. Recordings, transcripts, and notes will be kept in a locked secure location.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person or agency required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

**What are your rights as a research participant?**

You have rights as a research participant. These rights have been explained in this consent form and in *The Rights of Research Participants* that you have been given. If you have any questions concerning your rights, talk to the investigator or call the Institutional Review Board (IRB), telephone (402)-399-2400.

**What will happen if you decide not to participate in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to participate in this research study, or you can stop participating in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins. Deciding not to participate in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or Metropolitan Community College.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If the researcher receives any new information during this research study that may affect whether you would want to continue being in the study, you will be informed promptly.

**Participant Initials** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADULT Consent Form - PAGE FOUR****Documentation of informed consent.**

You are freely making a decision whether to participate in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered, and (4) you have decided to participate in the research study.

If you have any questions during the study, you should talk to one of the investigators listed below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

If you are 19 years of age or older and agree with the above, please sign below.

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

My signature certifies that all the elements of informed consent described on this form have been explained fully to the participant. In my judgment, the participant possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research and is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent to participate.

**Signature of Investigator:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorized Study Personnel.** Identify all personnel authorized to document consent as listed in the IRB Application. Use the following subheadings: Principal Investigator, Secondary Investigator(s), and Participating Personnel. Include day phone numbers for all listed individuals.

Principal Investigator: Vicki Londer

Phone: (308) 440-8397

Secondary Investigator: Dr. Merryellen Towey-Schulz

Phone: (402) 399-2432

## Appendix H: Rights of Research Participants



**As a Research Participant at College of Saint Mary  
You Have the Right:**

1. **To be told everything you need to know about the research before you are asked to decide whether or not to take part in the research study.** The research will be explained to you in a way that assures you understand enough to decide whether or not to take part.
2. **To freely decide whether or not to take part in the research.**
3. **To decide not to be in the research, or to stop participating in the research at any time.** This will not affect your relationship with the investigator or College of Saint Mary.
4. **To ask questions about the research at any time.** The investigator will answer your questions honestly and completely.
5. **To know that your safety and welfare will always come first.** The investigator will display the highest possible degree of skill and care throughout this research. Any risks or discomforts will be minimized as much as possible.
6. **To privacy and confidentiality.** The investigator will treat information about you carefully and will respect your privacy.
7. **To keep all the legal rights that you have now.** You are not giving up any of your legal rights by taking part in this research study.
8. **To be treated with dignity and respect at all times.**

The Institutional Review Board is responsible for assuring that your rights and welfare are protected. If you have any questions about your rights, contact the Institutional Review Board chair at (402) 399-2400. \*Adapted from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, IRB with permission. This was taken from page 35 of the College of Saint Mary 2012 Institutional Review Board Application Guidebook