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LIFTING THE VEIL OF INVISIBILITY: AN INTERPRETATIVE

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENT PERCEPTION AS RELATED TO

RESILIENCY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Education

By

Jennifer Mann

May 2016

LIFTING THE VEIL OF INVISIBILITY: AN INTERPRETATIVE

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENT PERCEPTION AS RELATED TO

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Approved November 11th, 2015

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ABSTRACT

LIFTING THE VEIL OF INVISIBILITY: AN INTERPRETATIVE

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENT PERCEPTION AS RELATED TO

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By

Jennifer Mann

May 2016

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Fran Serenka

This interpretative phenomenological study was an attempt to understand how marginalized, low socioeconomic students in a predominately white suburban school were able to succeed to graduation and beyond. Six students were interviewed using semi-structured questions in an audio-recorded interview while the researcher annotated the participants' body language, emotion, tone, and pauses. The researcher also examined the perceptions of the students as they related to Buber's existential I-Thou relational theory as well as other care-oriented educators such as Freire, Dewey, and Nel Noddings. Also informing the conceptual framework of the study were Milstein and others regarding resiliency.

Significant themes emerged from the participants' narratives; however, rather than the expected prevailing theme of resiliency, something unexpected emerged. The

participants all discussed the necessity of mattering to someone, of being heard and seen. This prevailing theme is what transformed the lives of these young people and gave them the inner strength to cope with often devastating events in their lives.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Geraldine B. Buffin, and my sister, Mary Heyl, who instilled in me a passion for knowledge, an appreciation of the value of service to others, and never-ending awe at their strength and courage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been one of the most tumultuous journeys of my life thus far, and without the emotional and intellectual support from my family, friends, and colleagues, my completion of the dissertation would not have been possible. First and foremost, I must thank my family: William, my husband, Jessica and Elizabeth, my daughters, and Michael, my son. Without your unwavering belief in my abilities and your endless support, this work would not have been possible. You give my life purpose and meaning and I would be lost without you all.

It is with my deepest gratitude that I acknowledge Dr. Jill Perry who became my touchstone during the past two years and who helped me to stay the course when all seemed pointless an impossible. Because of your guidance and dedication to education, I have finally arrived at my destination. I would also like to thank my chair, Dr. Fran Serenka for her guidance and patience during the entire "labor and delivery" of this dissertation and for believing in me even when I could not. I would also like to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Connie Moss, Dr. Gary Shank, Dr. Gretchen Generett, and Dr. Melanie Kerber who both collectively and individually provided me with the insight and scholarly guidance which enabled me to grow as a student, educator, and human being.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the courageous and honorable "dirties" who never gave up when others told them that they should, and who refused to accept the labels and limitations put on them by others. You are an inspiration to me and I consider myself blessed to be a member of such an auspicious group.

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Chapter I: The Problem in Context

For the first time in American history, poverty grew at a greater rate in suburban neighborhoods than in urban cities (Jargowsky, 2003; Kneebone and Garr, 2010). By the year 2000, 49% of the country's poor lived in suburbia (Berube and Frey, 2002). "Aside from the basic economic and demographic information these categorizations are built on, we know little about the suburban poor, their neighborhoods, the unique challenges they face, or the support systems to which they have access" (Murphy, 2010, p. 542). As a teacher in a suburban school affected by these changes in the socioeconomic dynamic, I see the greatest challenge as one of invisibility for the children of the suburban poor and working poor in our community. For the past thirteen years, I have been working in a suburban public school. There is little racial or ethnic diversity, which is typically associated with poverty, within the district; however, there is a clear line of socioeconomic divide among the students. The ethnic composition of the high school enrollment is; 1% of the students are African-American, 1% is Hispanic, and 2% are Native American. Three years ago, because only 4% of the students received free or reduced lunches, the district was defined as affluent. However, that status has changed and now as 20% are eligible for free and reduced lunches, as reported by the school in their 2014 Pennsylvania Department of Education. This change in socioeconomic status amongst district families is a direct reflection of what is happening in society as more and more Americans struggle to find and keep jobs and as their economic status fluctuates daily. I began my career in private schools where money was not an issue for families. When I first arrived at the public school, I was naïve as to the differences between a

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public and private school and so I was not prepared for the differences in expectations, needs, or workload. The adjustment was an eye-opening experience for me, as I believed that public school meant diversity and acceptance for diversity, but I quickly came to see the clear delineation of student groups within the school system.

The evolution of "the dirties"

Latino, African American, Feminist, Liberal, the labels have been used in culture since time began. Schools are no different. Since public schools have been in existence, students have been delineated by some label. Literature, movies, and musical theater have countless examples of this, such as *West Side Story*, *The Outsiders*, *and Grease*. To many, the labels are viewed as harmless; however, nothing could be further from the truth. The labels themselves have the power to ostracize or embolden a person or group. However, the true power goes to "those who have the advantage to choose the labels or categories into which those with less power are placed" (Mertens 2009, p.213). People who are labeled build their identity on the "basis of their representation in the media, their ability to migrate, exposure to other cultures, access to technology, and their transnational networks" (Mertens, 2009, p. 213). In other words, as the individual begins to accept their assigned label, they then behave in the predetermined stereotype of that label and base their identity on that image portrayed by the dominant society. Labels are dangerous when used to strengthen the hold of the dominant group and further diminish the weakened out-group. The label empowers the dominant group by diminishing the humanity of the out-group—making them mere objects and not worthy of acceptance.

Like any high school across the nation, there were several groups found in the school. In the book, *Jocks and Burnouts*, Penelope Eckert (1989) describes the social

structure in schools as an adversarial relationship between "jocks" and "burnouts" which are "embodiments of the middle and working class" (Eckert, 1989, p.5). Their relationship to the school and each other are defined in terms of which group accepts the values and interests of the school and to those who oppose or work to defy them (Eckert, 1989). At my school, there were multiple groups and, just as Eckert describes, the groups are representative of the changing socio-economic class struggle of our community and nation. There were the "preps". These were the students who dressed in labeled clothes from specific stores, who took honors classes, who participated in multiple activities, and respected by the faculty and most of their peers. The next level, which included many from the first category, was the "jocks," that title is self-explanatory, as all students who participated in sports were in this group. The next two groups were the "Goths" known for their black clothing, their black painted nails, and their punk style haircuts. These students were typically still involved in some activities; mainly in the arts and did not usually participate in the upper-level classes or social activities sponsored by the school. The next were the "Emos." These students, like the Goths, dressed in dark clothing and had a certain style of hair and makeup; however, their clothes usually had chains, studs, and tears added. They were the "depressed" or "emotional" student known amongst their peers as being emotionally volatile and unpredictable. The "junkies" were next, again, the terminology being self-explanatory. These students struggled with drug and alcohol addiction. These labels remained stable for years until the "Goth" label declined in usage, and the "emo" was removed altogether. As the socioeconomics changed in the school, a new label would evolve, "the dirties".

As the "the dirties" began to emerge within the district, it became apparent that it was more powerful and marginalizing than any other label as seen by the physical confrontations and the emotional turmoil that it aroused within the school. Being a member of the "dirties" offers no protection or prestige. This group struggles with bullying and are underrepresented in programs and over-represented in disciplinary actions and failing grades. What is even more interesting is that because there is no specific definition or no visual means in which to clearly identify members of the out-group, there are students who placed in the group without a clear reason. Once in, there is no way out. At first reserved for students who formerly would have been in the "junkie" category, this category eventually included students who were physically dirty or who had aggressive or emotional outbursts in class. At first the term was applied to students who attended the vocational school. With the socio-economic decline in our country, the poor students who could not buy the "proper" or accepted clothes, participate in certain activities, and who lived in certain areas of the district.

The label at first was reserved for a very limited number of students; however, recently there has been an increase in the use and numbers of students defined by this term within the district. One day in class, an AP student referred to a fellow student, not in the class, as "a dirty." A heated discussion ensued and one girl, in tears, yelled I am NOT a dirty! Her pain and frustration were palpable, and the words stung me. I asked the young man who began the discussion, "What, to you, is a dirty? Define that term for me." Out of embarrassment, he would not respond. Other students took on the cause: "Someone who is physically dirty and smells." "Someone who uses drugs." "Someone who doesn't care about school and causes problems." "Someone who goes to the

technical school and won't go to college." Out of the 25 students in that classroom, only one student felt empowered enough to take a stand and refuse to accept being labeled due to her socioeconomic status and career choice. Even more surprisingly, there was not one agreed upon definition for this deeply dividing label. This label was not born in a vacuum. Schools "structure and practices reflect the society that supports and controls them" (Eckert, 1989. P. 8). In other words, the community views those in lower socioeconomic class as being less than, as being "dirty" or "trash". American public schools were created to provide equal education to all children of all backgrounds. What is apparent through the ever-growing educational gap, public schools base their practices on one narrative, and that narrative is of the white middle-class American. Until that is recognized and changed, there will continue to be the formation of "dirties" and "outcasts".

Researcher subjectivity

The term enrages me. I literally feel my body prepare for fight mode when I hear the term. Why? Why does it disturb me so much? I had contemplated it before, but until that day, in that discussion, I did not understand my strong personal reaction. Growing up, I would have been labeled a dirty. I came from a dysfunctional family, a product of divorce, raised by a single parent who worked multiple jobs. I would go to school unkempt and unprepared. Feeling unloved and out of place, I would be prepared for battle every day. I would fight with authority at the slightest provocation. I frequently was absent and did not care about grades; I was in survival mode. After high school, I attended a technical school and became a nurse. Having to pay for it myself, I lived in the basement of a friend's house and lived off vegetables from another friend's garden,

cigarettes, and Diet Coke. A box of macaroni and cheese could last four days, and the

hospital provided me with one hot meal a day. I struggled, and I survived. Gradually I

was able to return to school and pursue a career determined by choice rather than by what

would provide a paycheck the fastest. I was a dirty. I married a mechanic who had gone

to the same vocational-technical school now despised by the students I was teaching; I

guess we were a family of dirties. My mother had managed to find a way for her children

to attend a private high school with a reputation for excellence because she valued

education. She had turned us over to the nuns who ran the school with the hopes that the

values and morals that they were known for would be an integral part of the school. As

most of the students were from affluent two-parent families, we stood out. It was never

directly stated that we did not fit in. However, it was obvious by the clothes we wore, the

travel and cultural opportunities we did not have, and our inability to participate in the

extracurricular offered at the school. I always believed that I had just been a difficult

child to know. After seeing the formation of the "dirty" group, I realized that I was, in

fact, a member of a low socioeconomic (SES) out-group without even being aware of it.

The school culture that I had been educated in at the time would not have allowed the

openly hateful label that I now hear every day.

"Dirty" defined

I wanted to know if the seemingly casual use of the term "dirty" was as prevalent and as

devastating as I believed or was I merely reacting due to my sensitivity. After gathering

perception data from staff and students through class discussions, as well as the annual

school survey, it became clear to see that the definition of the term "dirty" had a variety

of interpretations. However, regardless of the physical description or definition, the

students described were from lower socioeconomic homes and the majority of this

subgroup of individuals attended the local vocational school. Also, the majority of these

students was placed in "academic" or the lower level courses and was almost exclusively

the students involved in physical altercations and in-school suspension. Also, interesting

to note, typically the "dirties" use language and dress in a manner usually associated with

urban black youths.   Even though the majority of this group are openly racist (as

evidenced by their commentary on what is the "problem is with America") they seem to

identify with the same group they openly reject. This obvious paradox is not seen by this

marginalized group. As Weiss describes, these students are

> Armed with their whiteness, (working class) men and women hold together to
>
> preserve privileges in an economy that has stripped them of the life they knew…a
>
> move that enables this class fraction to continue to differentiate itself from an
>
> increasingly impoverished urban underclass of color as well as the now more
>
> racially/ethnically diverse broader working class. Collectively asserting
>
> whiteness, white working class men, and women, for the moment at least,
>
> converge as they work to position themselves for decades to come (Weiss, 2004,
>
> p. 164-165).

While the out-group can more readily relate to some of maltreatment that many African

American students face, they do not want to be identified with a group. However, just as

the students of color, this group of working class and working poor struggle with their

identity.   Lund and Carr (2007) describe such a dominate group as privileged by their

whiteness and unable to relate to the academic language and expectations placed on them

by the school and dominant group, they often are invisible within the school system.

The dominant group, understanding that this subgroup of students does not fit into the hegemony of the institution, created a label that allows a clear distinction between the groups, ensuring their dominance and power. By creating a derogatory name that allows for only one connotation, the dominant group gains power and prestige. There is no fighting the term. There is no way to disprove that it is not an accurate reflection of who the members of the subgroup are as individuals, and in doing so, the dominant group holds on to their status but it is at the cost of the out group's humanity. Much like the racism that permeates much of America, this classism creates a subgroup that does not see themselves as white, classist, or racist.

One would assume that to avoid being labeled as a "dirty", the out-group would attempt to blend in to avoid detection. Their choice of clothing at first seems to stem from financial influences. On closer examination, there seems to be an unwritten code, a uniform if you will, that most of the "dirty" students wear: pants wore low, hoodies, ball caps, and wallets on chains, converse tennis shoes or work boots. Freshmen would not adhere as closely to the code, but by junior year, they conform. Hajo Adam and Adam Galinsky (2012) discovered what they term enclothed cognition through experimentation. They saw that clothes become an integral part of a person's personality and sent subconscious messages to others about the wearer. In other words, when a person wore a specific type of clothing, like a lab coat, it increased the sustained attention that that individual received which they did not have in the same situation when not wearing it. Through this experiment, it was determined that the clothes then take on a symbolic meaning and the individual wearing it and affect the cognitive processes of both the wearer and the observer. The choice for the "dirties" to dress like a "thug" or a

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stereotypical urban youth of color implies that they too feel outcast and see the power in that lifestyle. Adopting such a dress code then sends a clear message to the dominant group that, "we are dangerous, and we should not be messed with." This message is apparently heard by faculty as well who openly discuss their dislike and distrust of "those kids." In the faculty room one day, a frustrated teacher exclaimed, "We should build a school for the dirties and send them all there so the rest of us can be in peace." She had no apology for this comment, as she truly believed she was correct in the assumption that by removing them from the school all of our ills would vanish.

The culture of classism

The greatest change in recent years has come due to the economic crisis in America. As more families move from upper to middle to low socioeconomic status, the needs of the child change as well. If this growing number of students becomes marginalized, the overall success of the school will be affected. Achievement and graduation rates will plummet, and more and more students will enter the workforce unprepared and frustrated due to feelings of alienation ultimately leading to an increase in the welfare rolls, as well as the prison population. Linda Darling-Hammond (2013), a Stanford University researcher in a *USA Today article* "noted that, compared with the 1970's, 60% more young people now live in poverty. She went on to say, "Nations that are outpacing us educationally don't allow their children to live in poverty" (Toppo, 2013). We are a nation in educational crisis. What is preventing us from addressing the crisis is that no one wants to discuss how poverty is creating an ever-growing educational gap, which knows no racial, ethnic, or geographic bounds. Once considered an urban problem, the new gap is quickly encompassing the white suburban population where shame and fear

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prevent many from seeking help. Interestingly, as the income gap has widened between

the socioeconomic levels, so has the achievement gap for the children in these groups.

This gap between high and low socioeconomic groups is 30-40% larger for children born

in 2001 than for those born 25 years earlier, and it continues to grow (Reardon, 2011).

This gap is now nearly two times as large as the black-white achievement gap. Fifty

years ago, the racial divide was one to two times as large as the income gap meaning that

not only are current public schools still experiencing a racial achievement gap but an

economic gap as well. Students who are in both groups will be at a greater disadvantage

with little hope of escaping the negative effects of these gaps. Family income is not

nearly as strong an indicator of student achievement as parent education once was in

predicting achievement (Reardon, 2011). The creation of the "dirty" class is certainly

emblematic of this growing crisis in America, and while it is a local term, the underlying

assumptions that created the term are nationwide.

Classism in schools

Many people believe that the poor are poor because they choose to live a certain type of

life that does not allow them to become successful. Even at an early age, young people

understand that the social structure of America determines what opportunities people

have, how they live, and what they believe. These beliefs create classism in school

systems which perceive poor students as being less worthy, less intelligent, and lazy

(Iversen & Farber, 1996; Wilson, 1997). "Although poor people are often stereotyped as

lazy, 83 percent of children from low-income families have at least one employed parent;

close to 60 percent have at least one parent who works full-time and year-round"

(National Center for Children in Poverty, 2004). In today's economy, the severe shortage

of living-wage jobs means that in order to survive, many poor adults must work two, three, or more jobs. This often means that the children in these families are left alone for long periods or are in daycare for long periods.   According to the Economic Policy Institute (2002), poor working adults spend more hours working each week than their wealthier counterparts (Iversen & Farber, 1996; Wilson, 1997).   Not only do they have less financial resources to get their children things like proper medical and dental care, tutoring services, and sports or art instruction, but they have less time to spend with their children. This affects their ability to assist with homework, attend parent conferences, or be an involved and active parent within the school system. This leaves their child with no advocate or voice in an impersonal system where he/she could easily become lost. These students become part of the growing statistics of welfare recipients, homeless, addicted, and outcasted in our society; however, some do not fall victim but rather find a way to succeed and move past the disparaging labels to become successful and happy adults. What enables one child to escape and others not?

Physiological effects of poverty

One prevailing false belief is that children who grow up in poverty have parents who are either unable or unwilling to help with school or who do not value education. However, a 2012 study conducted by Jednorog, K., Altarelli, I., Monzalvo K., Fluss, J., Dubois J., et al. has clearly demonstrated that parental socioeconomic status (SES) actually changes the composition of the brain matter thus making it more difficult to learn and achieve in school. Student participants, recruited from schools near Paris, represented a range of socioeconomic levels, with no identified learning disabilities, and all identified as full term and healthy with no physical or chronic psychiatric illnesses. A battery of tests

designed to assess their cognitive abilities were given to the subjects, which involved

reading skills, phonological skills, verbal skills, and visuospatial processing skills. Upon

completion of the assessments, students were then given MRI scans to analyze the gray

and white matter of their brains. The scans clearly showed that the actual brain structure

of students living in poverty was changed which accounted for the inability of the

students to process information with the speed and ability of their wealthier counterparts.

These changes, once believed to be seen only in cases of extreme poverty where the

physiological stress of famine and harsh environmental factors were to blame for

children's inability to achieve, are evident in developed nations as well. The rise in

poverty in the United States then is clearly creating an environment where the actual

physiological health and safety of our children is at risk (Jednorog, K., Altarelli, I.,

Monzalvo K., Fluss, J., Dubois J., et al., 2011).

　　　Jamie Hanson, Amitabh Chandra, Barbara Wolfe, and Seth Pollack' s 2011 study

on the association between income and the hippocampus (the area of the brain

responsible for learning and memory known to be affected by stress) agree with these

findings. Examining a cohort of 431 children ranging in ages from four to eighteen from

diverse household incomes across the United States, MRIs were given using a voxel-

based morphometry analytic framework to localize the area to be studied, the

hippocampus (in the grey matter) of the brain. It was discovered that children from lower

SES backgrounds had less gray matter than those from higher SES homes. The study

showed a direct link to income and the volume or growth in the hippocampus. There is a

causal link then, between poverty and actual brain function and growth, which affect

student achievement. It is not merely poor parenting or lack of involvement. An

environmental effect can temporarily alter the brain and forever the future of not only the children born into poverty, but for our nation as well. Can children who have been biologically altered due to their environment move forward and succeed or are they doomed to a life of poverty and struggle?

Psychosocial effects of poverty

If the brain is physically altered by living a life of poverty, what other aspects of the child can be affected? Does living in a low socioeconomic household affect the psychosocial traits of the child as well? A 2012 study supported by the National Institutes of Health and the William T. Grant Foundation argues that it does. The study, conducted by Nadia Ansari, Thomas McMahon, and Suniya Luther looked at the socioeconomic influence in behavior, emotional distress, delinquency and substance abuse. This was a longitudinal study conducted over three academic years. A variety of tests was administered to 318 ethnically diverse students in a financially prosperous suburban setting in the United States. These included the Negative Mood Scale Children's Depression Inventory, The Revised Manifest Anxiety Scale, a Self-Report Delinquency Checklist, and Monitoring for the Future Survey, and grade point average of each student. What was discovered was that achievement in the low socioeconomic group was "Particularly vulnerable to emotional disturbances in the short term and perhaps, more importantly, substance abuse in the long term" (Ansary, McMahon, &Luther, 2012, np). The implications from this study should sound a thundering alarm. Not only will poverty decrease the likelihood of low SES students from achieving in schools, it will increase the likelihood of behavioral problems and substance abuse, resulting in a greater burden on society and the economy creating a never-ending cycle.

The evidence clearly shows that poverty has a negative effect on brain development as well as the emotional and psychological development of the individual. There is also evidence to suggest that some of that negative influence can be decreased if the students have an affluent social group. In a 2010 meta-analysis, which analyzed student test scores and what affect their peers' socioeconomic status had on their achievement, Reyn van Ewijk and Peter Sleegers found that socioeconomic peer status may be an important determinant of academic achievement. By utilizing strict criteria, which omitted variable bias, they determined that the SES of classmates had a substantial effect on individual test scores. This clearly shows that it is essential to provide an economically diverse school environment, which is contrary to the current conversations on school choice, and school accountability, which typically clusters the students into socioeconomic homogeneous schools, which will lead to an ever-increasing achievement gap. As the number of those in financial crisis increases within our suburban schools, not only will the achievement gap increase, but the numbers of marginalized disenfranchised youth will increase as well. An entire generation could be lost.

Due to the fact that much of the revenue for educating America's children comes from state and local funds, for quite some time zip code has been the primary factor which determines the quality of the education our children receive; the wealthier you are, the better the facility, and educational quality you will receive. As more and more families are forced out of their homes due to job loss and poor economy, the question of how the relocation and the impact of new poverty are not known. In their study, *Neighborhood Effects in Temporal Perspective: The Impact of Long-Term Exposure to Concentrated Disadvantage on High School Graduation*, Geoffrey T. Wodtke, Daid

Harding, and Felix Elwert (2014) examined the impact of living a lifetime of poverty has on schooling.

The study followed 4,154 children ranging in ages from 1-17. The study showed that growing up in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods increased the probability of graduating by 20% for black children and 8% for nonblack children. The study used data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and GeoLytics Neighborhood Change Databases, which was a longitudinal study of families who were interviewed initially in 1968. Core families were interviewed annually were interviewed from 1968-1997 and biennially after that. Graduation, the interest of the study, was determined at 20 years of age. The results of the study showed that long-term exposure to poverty has a "devastating impact" on the chances of graduating from high school. By measuring the effects of poverty consistently and repeatedly throughout the school career, the investigators were able to examine the full impact of poverty on the student. Most studies do not examine the cumulative effect of poverty and, therefore, are unable to understand fully the role of the neighborhood on children's learning. The environment where the child lives plays a pivotal role in their ability to participate, compete, and succeed in schools. While the outlook is certainly grim, it is important to note that many children who appeared doomed by the impact of poverty in their lives, do succeed, in fact thrive once out of the confines of the school. What can explain this success? What accounts for the resiliency of these students?

Research questions

1. What allowed students who were marginalized and outcasted to persist to graduation and beyond?

2. What psychosocial traits are necessary for students prevail against the odds?

3. How did students develop the resiliency skills needed to overcome adverse climate and culture?

Glossary

1. **Bracketing**: a multistep process that allows the researcher to investigate meanings for what they reveal about the essential recurring features of the phenomenon being studied.

2. **Coding**: Close annotation of text

3. **Epoche**: a phase where the researcher eliminates, or clarifies a preconception.

4. **MKO**: More knowledgeable other

5. **Perceptual data**: data as perceived through one's senses

6. **Phenomenological reduction**: the researcher brackets out data in pure form.

7. **Superordiante themes**: broad theme categories

8. **Themes**: Recurring patterns of ideas, feelings, or thoughts

<center>**Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**</center>

Introduction

Perceptions of events and behaviors vary greatly from individual to individual. Two

people can observe the same situation or person and reach very different conclusions.

While this is what allows us to be individuals and can strengthen our relationships with

others, it can also lead to negative consequences that dehumanize and attack the well-

being of our society. Are those marginalized students in elementary and high schools

doomed to menial jobs, financial struggle, and continuing the cycle of poverty? What

enables some to escape their predicted fate? By searching through the literature, there are

many theories as to why individuals form groups, how they determine where they fit in

the society, and how they maintain that connection. By exploring how we make sense of

our world and make value decisions regarding what is important and what is not, a clearer

understanding of the individual can occur. This understanding then makes it possible to

appreciate the essential role that resiliency plays in our lives.

Buber (1923) I and Thou

Martin Buber (1923), in his work I *and Thou*, explains what he refers to as relational

theory. His belief is that our experience in the world is shared and interpersonal. We do

not choose our experiences, but rather merely exist and deal with the conditions in which

we find ourselves. The theory goes on to explain that humans then come to know

themselves through their interactions with others. He explains that there are two ways to

participate in the world. Characterized by the words I-It (which explains our

relationships with objects) and I –thou (which explains our relationships with others).

Because of such relationships and the recognition of reciprocity in the other, we as

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individuals can create our transformation through our understanding and recognition of our interactions with others.

Making Meaning From The World

Not every encounter with a person results in an I-Thou relationship. When faced with someone whom one does not like, who incites or fear, one does not see that person as an equal.   Because of this dehumanization, it is possible then to reduce a person to little more than an object, which lacks permanence or significance in his or her lives and the lives of those around them. By doing this, this individual can rationalize discrimination, prejudice, and marginalization.

Vygotsky (1962) Social Construct Theory

 Vygotsky (1962) who also discussed the importance of interactions in his Social Construct Theory. According Vygotsky, the individual creates meaning of the world based on their history and culture. Through interactions with other individuals or systems whose actions are perceived as a more knowledgeable other (MKO), they seek to understand their world.

The MKO does not have to be someone who, in fact, is more knowledgeable but rather merely someone that the individual perceives as the expert or as having more experience. The theory explains how certain leaders can rise to power without traditional expertise.   This MKO can also be an idea, a company, or any system that the individual sees as important or more knowledgeable or effective than they are. This dynamic is possible, according to I-Thou theory, because once the individual sees someone or something as the MKO, they have power over the individual and, ultimately, the group. This theory suggests that the collective group is more impact than the total sum of the

individual. Every individual brings to the group some personal contribution at various levels that they then contribute to the system creating a large and more significant collective, which gives the individual more power. Because the society and the individual are interconnected and constantly interacting, the change and development in one relentlessly influences the other. Vygotsky and Buber would agree then that it is possible for marginalization to exist because once the collective has dehumanized another group, it becomes acceptable to eliminate or degrade the out-group for the security of the dominant group.

Bandura and Walters (1963) Social Learning Theory

 Bandura and Walters' (1963)   Social Learning Theory, also explains that behavior "can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others" (Bandura & Walters, 1963, p. 3). The theory assumes that learning happens when the learner recognizes the "essential features of the model's behavior" (Bandura & Walters, 1963, p. 6). In other words, through observing and analyzing the motivations of the person (character) a learner comes to understand their behavior and its consequences. Through observation of the world around him/her as well as modeling from the instructor and parents, the learner learns what is socially acceptable. If, as according to Bandura, children learn and imitate behaviors that they observe in other people, how do the models that the child is observing relate to others in their world? Do they see others as people, (I-Thou)? If that is the case, the child will have empathy and show respect to others from a different class, race, or gender group. Does the model see others as mere objects (I-It) that lack significance and permanence? If that is the case, then the student will lack empathy, caring, and compassion to the out-group, dehumanizing them.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) Social Identity Theory

Once this occurs, the student then identifies with those that he/she relates to in the I-Thou

relationship and their identity with that group is created. Social identity theory,

developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979, proposed that there be three mental

processes involved in evaluating others as "in-group" and an "out-group." The first is

categorization. Using social categories like black, white, preppies, and dirties, are useful

to understand the social environment. Also, understanding what categories to which we

belong helps the individual then to define appropriate behavior by reference to the norms

of the group. In the second stage, social identification, the individual adopts the identity

of the group they have categorized themselves to which they belong. Once this

emotional attachment occurs, self-esteem becomes intertwined with group membership.

The final stage in social identity theory is a social comparison. Once categorized as part

of a group and identified with that group one then tends to compare that group with other

groups. If group members are to maintain self-esteem amongst group members, the group

members need to compare favorably with other groups. "This is critical to understanding

prejudice, because once two groups identify themselves as rivals they are forced to

compete for the members to maintain their self-esteem. Competition and hostility

between groups are thus not only a matter of competing for resources like jobs but also

the result of competing identities" (McLeod, 2008). As the out-group continues to

struggle and cause disruption within the school, the dominant group is validated that they

are the superior group. They mock and ridicule the out-group who responds with more

hostility and so the cycle continues without any end in sight. According to Tajfel, social

identity is "a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership" (Tajfel,

1982, p. 110) He suggested that the groups to which people choose to belong are important as they give the individual a sense of belonging and acceptance in the social world. To feel better about themselves, the individual enhances the status to which they belong and create a "them versus us" or an in-group versus an out-group. Simply put, individuals need to create out groups to feel important or successful. If there is no obvious out-group, an out-group is then created through social categorization. This is seen in suburban schools where visually there is no out-group; therefore, one is created in order for group members of an in-group seeking "to find negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 122) He suggested that this categorization or the need to group things together, was a normal cognitive process. However, when this occurs, there is a tendency to exaggerate the differences of the out-group and the similarities of the in-group thus creating a hostile and indifferent social environment, which affects student achievement of the out-group. The creation of groups, although natural, can have devastating consequences to the student who is categorized based on factors out of his/her control. Buber (1923) would explain these phenomena by explaining that those of the hostile in-group do not perceive the individual as a person, but rather an "it" or an object. This perception dehumanizes the individual in an effort to make sense of their world and emotions. The relational perspective then does more than merely look at the social nature of existence but rather how our meaning is made that mirror our own.

Social Learning Theories As Part Of Our Current Education System

The systems in place within our schools which allow a dominate group to overpower the individual demonstrate that the school systems devalue individuality. In fact, the current

system of "accountability" was derived from assumptions about the way schools and students "should be" rather than how they actually are. This leaves many students on the outside looking in. By reducing students to mere dots on a plot line, the institution and those within it are creating an I-It relationship. This relationship dehumanizes and devalues students that are not deemed significant due to their academic choices and/or weaknesses.

One may assume that schools would be a haven for individuality and acceptance, a place where social transformation occurs. Dewey (1938) continually argued that education and learning are social and interactive processes, and thus the school itself is a social institution through which social reform can take place. Also, he believed that all students should have the opportunity to take part in their learning. Dewey makes a strong case for the importance of education not only as a place to gain content knowledge but also as a place to learn how to live. Dewey (1938) acknowledges that education and schooling are instrumental in creating social change and reform. He explained that when a child merely does as he has been told to do, it not true education. It is when the child realizes "his impulse by recognizing the fact, materials, and conditions involved, and then to regulate his impulse by recognizing the facts is true education" (Dewey, 2001, p. 28). While Dewey offers moral reasoning for education, he could not have possibly seen the current impact of classism in our educational system. Social media, recession, massive public schools that cater to the privileged in our society make Dewey's view of the role of the school appear outdated. However, as Darling Hammond (2010) so eloquently stated, "Central to our collective future is the recognition that our capacity to survive and thrive ultimately depends on ensuring to all of our people what should be an

unquestioned entitlement-a rich and inalienable right to learn" (Darling- Hammond, 2010, p. 328). Sadly, with the change in focus on "accountability", students have been lessened to mere data points, and their individual differences dismissed. Buber was correct when he described that by relegating people to mere objects; it then becomes easier to leave them behind as if they were invisible. The culture within our schools must change to help all students succeed. Nel Noddings (2012) explains that there is a long list of environmental factors that affect student success (Noddings, 2012). Often children [low SES] suffer from untreated illnesses due to lack of health care, dental problems, and asthma. Noddings believes that a just society would do something to remove the worst of these inequalities simply because it is morally the right thing to do. However, one cannot rely on any system or person doing what is morally or ethically right; therefore, one must develop resilience and self-efficacy to achieve and succeed. Like Buber, she describes a social justice issue where students who do not meet the expectations of the system (or "what should be) are treated as objects and pushed to the wayside and forgotten. The goals and dreams of the individual seem frivolous and insignificant in the unaccepting and unforgiving world of the current data driven, college centered world of secondary education.   Claude M. Steele (1997) would describe this treatment of the "dirties" as a stereotype threat and domain identification issue. This theory states that individuals from stereotyped groups are treated poorly and devalued by the dominant group and, not able to overcome this burden, do not perform as well as their non-stigmatized peers. The results of this ca be seen in the impaired performance and lower expectations of people of color in schools with diverse populations as wee as in children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This pressure can affect test performance and academic identities and is

known as stereotype threat. Carr and Steele (2009) conducted a two-step study which examined how the stereotype threat affected African American males and women who experienced the effects of negative stereotypes in a university setting. It was determined that participants who were threatened by stereotypes were less likely to employ strategies that would allow them to succeed. They maintained what is described as inflexible perseverance meaning that because they innately knew of the expectations based on their gender and race, they chose behaviors that met the expectations and therefore their decision making and job performance were affected. Interestingly, if the participant did not identify with the stereotype, they did not demonstrate inflexible perseverance and were more successful. Steele (1997) explains that the key to recognizing a negative stereotype and its effects on the individual can only occur if the individual believes that it is applicable to him or herself in a particular situation. Buber would explain this as result of the individual identifying with their oppressor and seeing themselves as unworthy- just as their oppressors do. This could explain the behavior of the students within the "dirty" group-they merely became the image created for them by the dominant group.

Paulo Freire (1970) Conscientization

The notion on I-Thou is not merely how we see others, but how we see ourselves as well. Freire (1970) believed that it is imperative that the oppressed regain their sense of humanity, to overcome their condition. He believed that for this to occur, the oppressed individual must play a role in their liberation. The oppressors must be willing to rethink their way of life and to examine their role in the oppression if true liberation is to occur. Rather than falling prey to how others see him/her, the individual must continue to see themselves as significant and valuable human beings. Freire also rejects the notion that

students are empty vessels or "banks" waiting for the teacher to fill them up with knowledge. He claims that would dehumanize the student and the teacher. Instead, he tells the reader that there needs to be an authentic approach to learning where the student becomes aware of his or her perceptions and then work to become a better human. Conscientization occurs when education is used to shape consciously the human and in doing so, society. Freire believed that there is an unspoken moral obligation to the student who is mandated to sit before us. The current system, which does not address the morality of education, devalues the individual, and will continue to subjugate the students if they also see themselves as mere dots on the number line. The resilient student will be able to reflect on their beliefs and then work to achieve and succeed regardless of the obstacles placed before them. Freire, like Buber, calls upon the individual to identify others and themselves as worthy and valuable to the system at large. Not only will this free them from the cycle of adversity in their lives, but they will also develop empathy and compassion creating better humankind.

The Role of Resiliency

The ethical questions posed by Buber (1923, 1957) and Noddings (2012) therefore become a focal point in this study. The purpose was to explore how students can survive and thrive in a hostile culture, which does not accept them or support them. What happens to the people who are treated as mere objects and are left behind or ignored by the current educational culture of accountability? How many of these students, assumed doomed to a life of failure and poverty, actually not only survive but also thrive once away from the educational setting? What gives them the resiliency to carry on in the face of such a climate? Milstein and Henderson (2003) and Catterall (1998) espouse that the

resilient person is one who is able to identify their own goals and make choices based on achieving those goals in socially acceptable ways. Milstein and Henderson (2003) created a six-step "resiliency wheel" that describes the process of fostering resiliency (Henderson & Milstein, 2003, p. 12). Process one, called "mitigating risk" includes steps one through three on the wheel: increasing bonding, setting clear and consistent boundaries, and teaching life skills. These first steps are ways in which students manage their environment and circumstances. The second process in building resiliency includes steps four through 6: providing care and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing for meaningful participation, together work to build and support resiliency in students. This explanation gives insight into why some students can escape the negative effects of marginalization and why others are not so fortunate. Another explanation is related to Buber's theory (1923) of I-Thou where students are seen as individuals and therefore allowed to maintain their individuality and humanity. Also, it also demonstrates how and when the student has an opportunity to develop qualities of resiliency, which will enable them to achieve and adapt their entire lives.

The history of resiliency inquiry

Resiliency is an intangible response to adversity created by life experiences, spirituality, and social contexts. It supplies the individual with the strength to survive psychological, spiritual, physical, and social trauma, and has long been studied in a variety of clinical and education.

Resiliency inquiry is examined in phenomenological study. A qualitative phenomenological study examines lived experiences through first person accounts to understand the lived experience and the perceptions of those who lived them. It is

attempting to explain phenomena that cannot be quantified. An example of an early study of resiliency was examining what characteristics survivors of trauma display as opposed to those who are unable to recover from the same type of trauma. The outcome of these early studies was a list of qualities found in those individuals who displayed resiliency.   Perhaps the most tragic, but most obvious victims of the I-It dehumanization, as described by Buber, are the victims of the Holocaust. The survivors of the Holocaust, who somehow managed to survive physically the horrors of the concentration camps, went on to continue to be emotionally, and psychologically sound productive members of society are examples of subjects of the resiliency studied during the first wave of exploration. What they survived was unimaginable to most of us and so many psychologists, and sociologists wanted to identify how that was possible and if it applied to other circumstances. Refugees, victims of natural disasters, terrorism, and war would later be the focus of studies in order to determine how some people are able to "bounce back" from such atrocities when others cannot. The most recent studies examined innate resilience, which helps to articulate what force drives a person toward reintegration after trauma such as severe poverty, devastating illnesses, and mental health issues.

Resiliency in schools

Both resilience and resiliency are metatheories, which provide an umbrella for most psychological and educational theories (Richardson, 2002). Emmy Werner (1982) began a 30-year longitudinal study in 1955 looking at children designated to be at high risk due to environmental factors. 200 out of 700 children deemed at risk due to poverty, family instability, and parental mental health problems. She discovered that out of the 700 children studied, 72 were doing well despite the environment in which they lived. Using

a phenomenological study, she was able to identify and categorize resilient qualities that the children possessed. She included personal characteristics as well as described the care given in environments both within the home and outside of the family, which helped the children to survive and thrive in their adverse settings. By identifying those characteristics, we can become more aware of what children need to survive in the rapidly changing world in which we live. Michael Rutter (1979, 1985), a British Psychiatrist, conducted a series of epidemiological studies on inner-city London youth and the rural island of Wight. Just as Werner had discovered in her study, he too discovered that one-quarter of the children were resilient even though they may have experienced many risk factors. "Some of the resilient qualities that Rutter identified were easy temperament, being female, a positive school climate, self-mastery, self-efficacy, planning skills, and a warm, close, personal relationship with an adult" (Richardson, 2002, p. 310).

Rirkin and Hoopman (1991)

Rirkin and Hoopman (1991) define resilience as "as the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply to the stress that is inherent in today's world"(7). This resilience can vary from person to person and can grow or decline over time. Home, friends, and schools can help the person develop protective factors to aid the individual all throughout life; however, when "stressful life outweigh the protective factors, even the most resilient…can develop problems" (Werner, 1990, p.111).

Resiliency Model

  Richardson et al. (1990)

According to the resiliency model (Richardson et all, 1990), when an individual of any age experiences adversity, they draw from protective factors that they have innately created that help buffer the negative attack. With enough protective factors established, the individual can overcome the negative experience without any significant disruption to their psychological well-being. They are in "homeostasis" (5) or can move to a level of increased resiliency as they develop factors that are more protective. If they do not have the necessary protective factors, then they will experience psychological disruptions and may, over time, re-enter into homeostasis, or reintegration (5). Depending on their protective factors, the individual may take on "traits of dysfunction" (6) such as substance abuse, suicidal ideation, or loss of coping mechanisms. The individual may eventually return to homeostasis or increased resiliency. This model demonstrates that adversity does not automatically lead to dysfunction, and that is possible for someone who experiences adversity and dysfunctionality to experiences resiliency again (Richardson, 1990). The resiliency model clearly shows how then it is possible for students who experience marginalization and lack of opportunities to still achieve and be successful in their lives.

  Henderson and Milstein (2003)

Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein (2003) agree with Richardson. They see resilience as the ability to rebound successfully from adversity and develop "social, academic, and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply the stress that is inherent in today's world" (Henderson & Milstein, 2003, p. 7). Students, who can

function in schools although facing extreme poverty, are then demonstrating resiliency. This resiliency is "critical to student and educator success" (Henderson & Milstein, 2003, p. 15) and does not come without a resiliency developing environment. According to Henderson and Millstein (2003), other than families, "schools are the most likely place for students to experience resiliency (17). Developing resilience is vital for the student to develop a sense of self and competency at problem-solving. Henderson and Milstein (2003) warn though "that individual effort is only part of the resiliency process. The resiliency research clearly states that supportive environments are necessary" (44). As the economy continues to fluctuate, and more and more students enter into poverty, the need to have learning environments that will assist the student to overcome the adversity in their lives and achieve to their highest potential.

The work of Buber, and Milstein will be focal points in this research. The study will explore student perceptions of rationality, or how their encounters within the school system as well as with their peers, teachers, administrators, and community either have allowed them to have a voice, or has stifled them. Although Buber did not specifically attach the theory to educational settings, by applying it to the events within the school culture, an understanding of behaviors and responses will be evident to the researcher.
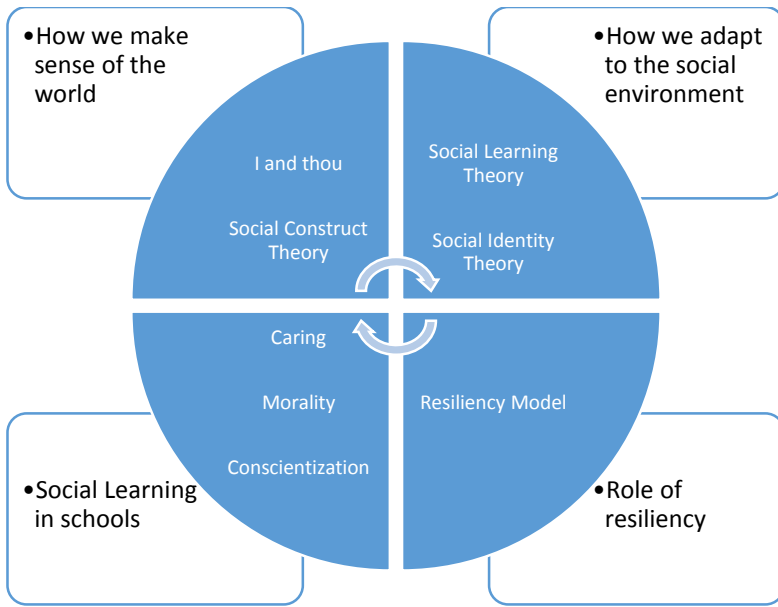
Figure 1:1 Conceptual Framework

Chapter III: Methodology

This study is constructed as an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) of student perception. The perceptions investigated are of former high school students who, while in high school, were marginalized and identified as a member of the out-group known as "the dirties," and how they view their experiences while in school, currently, and the future. Conversations with the participants focused on the educational culture and climate that existed in their school, their feelings of belongingness while in school, and the connotation of being categorized as one of the "dirties." Also explored was the educational process each student experienced while within the school along with the students' ideas of their success and to what personal attributes do they attribute that success.

The conversations during the interviews were informed using the six components of resiliency found in Resiliency in Action Edited by Nan Henderson (2003). Utilizing questions posed by Henderson (2003) for "Discussion about your resiliency" (Henderson, 2003, p. 172) as a guide for the interview and the final analysis. The goal of IPA is to examine not only what the participant said, but also how the participant makes sense of their experience (Smith, Eatough, Braikwell, & Fife-Shaw, 2006). To accomplish this, the interview was flexible and semi-structured to allow the respondent more freedom in exploring their thoughts and perceptions about their school experience. Although all respondents were asked the same six interview questions at some point during the interview process, the questions strands were used as a guideline only. The conversations were permitted to take a natural course as respondents were encouraged to discuss their

experiences and perceptions as they occurred to them. This allowed a natural flow to the conversation and a safe environment which encouraged deeper reflection for the respondents. Once completed, the transcripts were then be annotated and analyzed for emergent themes. The research then attempted to identify and explore the resilient qualities that enable marginalized students to not only survive but also thrive the negative culture that exists within the school.

The study's participants included students who have been out of school for at least one year. This requirement ensured that participants were able to reflect on their high school experience, with an adequate amount of time to debrief and make meaning of their experience, thus affording them the opportunity to develop insight into their perceptions and reflections of the time they spent in school. Through the interviews, participants were able to provide scenarios and authentic data replete with significant information related to their resiliency (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This chapter provides a framework for analysis and interpretation that will be expanded in Chapters IV and V. Sections regarding setting, participants, instrumentation, procedure, and methods of data analysis will be presented in this chapter.

Setting

The school is the last school labeled as "rural" in Allegheny County, PA. There are 587 students in grades 9-12. There is little racial or ethnic diversity within the district; however, there is a clear line of socioeconomic divide among the students. The ethnic composition of the high school enrollment is 3% for all minorities. Three years ago, the socioeconomic status was 15% eligible for free lunches, and 9% are eligible for reduced lunches as reported by the school for their 2010 as reported for the 2010 *Accreditation for*

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Growth report. Currently, this has increased to 33%. This change in socioeconomic

status amongst district families is a direct reflection of what is happening in society as

more and more Americans struggle to find and keep jobs as their economic status

fluctuates daily.

As in all schools, it is not at all uncommon for students to label one another;

"jocks," "nerds," and preps are not new labels placed on students. However, a new label

began to emerge within the district that was in a category lower than all of the rest; "the

dirties". This group struggles with bullying and are underrepresented in programs and

over-represented in disciplinary actions and failing grades. What is even more interesting

is that because there is no specific definition, no way to identify clearly the members of

the out-group, there are students placed in the group without a clear reason. Once in,

there is no way out.   At first reserved for a student who formerly would have been placed

in the "junkie" category, this category eventually included students who were physically

dirty or who had aggressive or emotional outbursts in class.   The term came to be applied

to students who attended the vocational schools and the poor students who could not buy

the "proper" clothes, participate in certain activities, and who lived in certain urban areas

of the district. As socioeconomic disparity increases, so does the divide between the

students who are labeled and marginalized by students, staff, and faculty. The effects of

this disparity is seen in increased absenteeism of both students and faculties, increased

disciplinary referrals, and increased physical altercations between members of the outcast

and dominate groups.

For this study, a sample of six students were contacted. Once said students agreed

to participate, they were given a consent document. Once consents were signed,

participants were interviewed at an off-site location. The conversations were recorded

and transcribed. A copy of the transcript was sent to the participants who had the

opportunity to add, delete, or change any of the contents, or they could request an

additional interview session if they felt they needed to explicate or discuss their

perceptions further. The participants were recruited from graduates who attended the

vocational school and who were considered members of the out-group by faculty and

students.

Sample

According to Merriam (2002), qualitative research is focused on "understanding the

meaning people have constructed, that is how they make sense of their world and the

experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). In other words, not only what

they experienced, but also how they make sense of it, or their perceptions of the event or

situation. To do this, it was essential that participants would feel comfortable and safe

enough with the researcher to create an environment where they could open up and share

their experiences. By allowing the participants to provide their insights through vignettes

and authentic data from their lived experience, the researcher then more clearly

understands the complexity of the psychosocial phenomena that is being described

(Smith and Osborn, 2003).   This type of research is "conducted with relatively small

sample size" (Lyons & Coyle, 2007, p. 39). The priority is to "do justice to each case,

and the detailed case-by-case analysis of individual transcripts or accounts takes a long

time" (Lyons and Cole 2007, p. 39). Limiting the participants to six allowed for

questioning at a much deeper level. Sanders (1982) cautions that more participants do

not mean that the quality or quantity of the information will be greater. By learning more

about individuals who shared a common experience, which was different from our own, "brings us closer to significant aspects of the generally; connecting with his/her unique individual life also connects with a shared humanity" (Lyons and Cole 2007, p. 40). Using semi-structured interviews, the participants had the freedom to explore fully not only what happened, but also their feelings about it. The researcher then examined what they said as well as viewed how they constructed their experiences and the impact that construct has had on their lives (Smith et al., 2006). For this study, it was necessary for students to self-identify as members of the out-group and/or the vocational school.

Participant descriptions

The participants in this study attended the suburban school located in Allegheny County. The participants were members of the school's dual enrollment program: attending both the vocational school and the academic high school. Moreover, each participant self-identifies as either/or a member of the "dirty" group or the vocational school. Both male and female students were eligible. A detailed table of participant specifics is included below to highlight participant similarities and differences in regard to their background and chosen careers. This table highlights the varied backgrounds and areas of study owned by the participants. Detailed descriptions of all the participants follows.

Participant Descriptions				
Pseudonym	**Sex**	**Age**	**Career Field**	**Acknowledgement of "Dirty" Subculture**
Matthew	Male	45	Aeronautics	No
Mark	Male	27	Auto Mechanics	Yes
Luke	Male	23	Military	Yes
Mary	Female	21	Culinary	Yes
Ruth	Female	21	Nursing	Yes
Sarah	Female	19	Childcare	Yes

Table 2.1

Matthew

Matthew, 45, was eldest of the respondents. One of the first to respond to social media, he was anxious to discuss how the vocational school had helped him become successful in life. As a student, he had studied computer science and upon graduating high school joined the air force. After serving 4 years, he married, had two children, and moved to the Midwest where he lives today working for a major airplane manufacturer. He recalled his secondary school experience as "okay" and although he never felt "like he belonged" in the high school, he did not experience bullying or alienation but rather isolation while at the high school and a sense of camaraderie at the vocational school.

Mark

Born and raised in the small community surround the school, Mark, 27, studied mechanics at the vocational school. His mother experienced job loss several times during his schooling, and his father was also a mechanic. A member of the football, volleyball, and baseball teams, Mark describes his ability to "move in and out" of the groups at school unnoticed. He "learned early to be cool with everybody" so that he could blend in to avoid detection and controversy. Known by the faculty as a "nice but lost boy" most doubted his success and work ethic throughout his secondary career. Devoted to his family, he began working full time during high school when his mother lost her job and his sister was in middle school. A working mechanic now, he holds two full time jobs and is deeply concerned about his parents' health and happiness. He describes "fighting the gnawing feeling" that he will end up alone. He describes his life as "ok, but I want more." When asked about his experiences at high school he told the researcher, "I can't blame anyone for it-that is all on me. It wasn't terrible, it just was, you know, school."

Luke

Now 23 years old, Luke had been a struggling student while in high school. Unable to pass the state standardized test until he reached the twelfth grade, Luke was placed in remedial classes since the 10th grade. A frequent visitor at the principal's office, Luke was considered by many students and faculty to be destined for prison. He frequently had arguments with teachers over perceived lack of respect and what he saw as unfairness. His parents struggled financially and with their relationship and he was responsible for the care of his younger sister. He was trained as a car mechanic at the vocational school but was encouraged by his instructors to go into aeronautics. After graduating high school, he joined the army and saw two tours of active duty in Afghanistan as an Explosive Ordinance Disposal Specialist. It was on his second tour that his platoon was hit and they lost six of their men. He described the tremendous feeling of loss and responsibility that he still carries to this day. He continues to be active in the Army Reserves and proudly showed me a tattoo commemorating his lost men. His focus on his schooling was the lack of fairness and opportunity for the people in our community without money. He also saw the educational system at the high school as a "waste of time" filled with teachers "who did not like kids" while his time at the vocational school "opened his eyes" to what he "could be after his service ended." A prankster in high school, he perhaps shocked the researcher the most with his strong physically fit appearance, his impeccable manners, and his openness which as a teacher or his I had never experienced before.

Mary

Mary is a dark haired, quiet, reserved young woman of 21 who always took her education seriously. A valedictorian of the vocational school, Mary won awards and scholarships in the culinary arts since her junior year in high school. In addition to her extensive culinary knowledge, Mary was also in advanced classes in math, English, and history. She did acknowledge that many considered her friends to be "dirties, but I wasn't." Interestingly, many of her peers did consider her a member of this group and on one occasion I heard a colleague sigh and say, "Too bad she has to be involved with that group, she has potential." Her parents struggled financially during her high school years. Working 25-30 hours a week all through high school, and an active member of the volleyball team, Mary graduated as valedictorian of the vocational school and in the top 15% at the high school. She attended a local university for three years and currently works at a well-established and respected restaurant club in the city of Pittsburgh. She lives at home, has bought a car, and is saving to move to her own apartment. When asked about her secondary school experience, she became teary and said, "It was ok. I just wish that people would give people a chance. I mean I did ok, but others didn't." In addition to her own struggles, her brother attends the high school and struggles with his grades, but "he plays football, so he should be ok-they like the football guys."

Ruth

Ruth, 21, is a tall, thin, quiet young woman who worked full time all through high school. She was surrounded by addiction all during her formative years and watched 2 aunts and a cousin die from overdose. Her sister also struggled with addiction, but fortunately was able to get the help she needed after her third child was born. In addition, her father

abandoned her and her mother as he chased his own demons through alcohol. In addition to her regular studies, Ruth became interested in nursing when her beloved grandfather was stricken with cancer. She helped her mother and grandmother care for him until his death and then decided to become a nurse because "he would want me to do that." She attended the vocational school for medical assistance courses and is currently enrolled in a hospital nursing program where financial struggles continue to plague her and she must work two jobs while in school in order to pay tuition. She recalled that during high school, many of the male teachers would often approach her and say, "Hey, get away from those clowns you hang with and play some basketball-you got the height." She found that amusing as she did see herself as athletic and certainly had no time to play ball while going to school and working full time at a local fast food restaurant. She became their youngest training manager in the region at 17 while in school. When discussing her secondary school years she smiles and says, "I liked school. I liked my friends. Sometimes I miss it."

Sarah

The youngest of the respondents, Sarah is 19 years old and works as a nanny to a local lawyer. She too worked full time all throughout high school and attended the vocational school for child development. During her junior and senior year in school, she would open the child care center at the vocational school, come to the high school for classes, and then return to the vocational school after school and work at the child care center until close. She also worked part time at a local restaurant. In addition to her vocational classes, she also attended the local community college and has an associate's degree in child development. Her original intention was to become a kindergarten teacher, but now

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does not want to pursue a degree. She moved out of her house at 17 and provided all of her own food, housing, and transportation. She is currently living with her high school sweetheart and the two of them have bought a house and are planning to get married. She loved the vocational school, but felt that her time at the high school was as waste of time. She said that she told her mother on more than one occasion that she had "learned more in a day at the vocational school than all four years at the high school." Unable to pass the state standardized tests, she was placed in remedial classes since middle school. She was also identified as "Special Ed", a label which she felt did "more damage than being called anything else." Her brother also struggled in school and eventually quit at 16 to get his GED. She ran with a "rough crowd" in high school who "liked to party too much" but she was "not like that because I wasn't going to waste my money on that crap." She "knows that none of the teachers at the high school thought that she would make it, but the ones at the vocational school did-and so did I." When asked about her secondary school experiences she said, "It was just something you had to live through. Everybody has something."

The sample was purposefully recruited in order to show not only the wide variety of career paths dual-enrollment students take, but to also allow for a broad range of perspectives in regard to school experience. The study was voluntary, and the identity of the students will remain anonymous during the study. Participants were given all information needed to participate in the study. Specific vocabulary to be utilized was listed, defined and explained in print and if necessary in person to the participants by the researcher.

Confidentiality

The proposal for this research study was submitted to the Duquesne University Internal

Review Board (IRB) for approval in March 2015. It did not require full board approval

as the research participants were over the age of 18.

The data collection method included audiotaping, and observations expanded into

transcription and eventual descriptive data analysis. Participant information was and will

continue to be secure at all times with no real names attached to any of the material.

Pseudonyms were given in the first phase of data collection and maintained throughout

the study. As there were only six participants in the study, great care was taken to

remove all descriptors, names of all persons mentioned as well as the school name.

Final Reporting and Information Disclosure

Throughout the research study, participants were assured of sustained confidentiality.

The method of analysis was shared with participants, and the procedure for reporting the

information was described fully. It is essential to the success of this research that a

relationship of trust and caring was developed with participants. The researcher has 27

years of experience working with students in suburban and urban settings. Use of

professional demeanor, engaged style, active listening skills, and relating skills is

necessary to develop the relationships with participants.

Design

The study was designed as an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of student

perceptions on resiliency. The aim of IPA is to "explore in detail individual personal and

lived experience and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and

social world" (Lyons and Cole 2007, p.35-36). As participants reflect on the events that

occurred to them during their schooling and the perceptions attached to those events, the key to student resiliency and success can be learned.

The study data collection and analysis were conducted as follows. Initial individual interviews were conducted and tape-recorded by the researcher. These semi-structured interview questions addressed the three research questions. Follow-up questions were utilized as needed to explore in depth the participant's perceptions and reflections. Next was the documentary study, which was comprised of anecdotal notes made by the researcher recorded during each of the participant interviews. Notes were taken while the recorded interview was progressing highlighting and identifying themes and ideas. The final area of data collection was participant observations. Behaviors and non-verbal responses were recorded by the researcher as well.

Analysis began with a careful transcription of the tape-recorded conversations including talk of the interviewer. After, reading each transcript several times, the researcher notated anything that appeared significant or of interest. With each reading, comments and analysis by the researcher became more in depth, and recurring themes began to emerge. The next stage was to analyze the researcher's comments and make connections between the researcher's annotations and the participant's comments. By focusing on the recurring themes and clustering the like ones and eliminating the random or less noted themes, the mass quantity of data was reduced, and sense made of the remaining information. Finally, a table was produced which showed each superordinate theme and the themes that comprise it (Smith 2006). This study is in search of the participants' individual perception of resiliency and success from high school to present.

Instrumentation for data collection

Instrumentation for this study begins with a digital recording device that enabled the conversations to be recorded and managed effectively to ensure fidelity in transcription. Participants were identified by pseudonym during the recording and data compilation. An interview schedule with flexible semi-structured questions was used with each participant. As the conversations progressed, and the participants divulged their feelings about their experiences, resiliency, and success, other questions were entered into the dialog. The semi-structured interview questions were constructed from *Resiliency in Action* formulated in advance of the interview and acted as a guide for the conversations during the interview. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and the transcription of the interviews using DeDoose, and anecdotal notes were used to collate the information.

Instrumentation for Data Analysis

The first phase of IPA is the descriptive phase. Instrumentation for this phase includes hard copies of transcribed individual interviews and data grid created in a spreadsheet format. Data analyzes took place after each interview was completed, and again after all interviews were completed. The individual responses were coded, and the major themes were determined and recorded on the spreadsheet to determine the frequency of themes and trends in the perception data. After the final interview, the themes were sorted, grouped according to frequency, and a final spreadsheet created.

The second step in the analysis was the identification of variant themes. To determine these, an analysis of the spreadsheet was done and the gender, years out of

school, the degree of positive and negative attributes was then assigned. These themes were identified as the invariant themes and the reassigned to various participants.

The third level of analysis looked at the perceived experiences of the participants and the perceived impact it had on their lives. Notes taken by the interviewer were also used to create the superordinate themes. This category looks closely at patterns in participants' responses, reactions, and descriptions of each personal experience. This final set of themes was summarized and placed into a table with textual evidence to support the creation of the theme. The participant's words are the evidence used to support the researcher's label of the themes.

The final step in IPA is connecting the correlates to help identify the essence of the phenomenon. Because the phenomena are derived from perceptions of a lived experience, it often becomes entangled with other events and perceptions. It then becomes imperative that the singular phenomenon be extracted and analyzed as it relates to resiliency and success. This was done by allowing the participant to recall their perceptions and tell their narratives without judgment or verbal analysis from the researcher and using their words to create and validate themes.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to gather data regarding student perception of

marginalization within a high school based on classism. The method of analysis is

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. There are three research questions.

1. What allowed students who were marginalized and out-casted to persist to

    graduation and beyond?

2. What psychosocial traits are necessary for students prevail against the

    odds?

3. How did students develop the resiliency skills needed to overcome adverse

    climate and culture?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an approach to experiential,

qualitative research that has gained popularity in the last ten years (Smith et al. 2009).

The roots of IPA are in psychology, and the assumption of IPA is that the analyst's goal

is to learn something about the respondent's perception and feelings about an event or

time in their lives. Meaning is central and rather than merely counting the frequency of a

particular response; the aim is to understand the complexity and content of those

meanings. The perspective of IPA is different from earlier descriptive phenomenological

approaches such as those of the founding father of phenomenology, Husserl (1931).

Discussions of emergent themes allow the researcher to be a witness (Barbour 2007) to

the participant's experience.   To do this, the investigator must engage in an interpretive

relationship with the transcript. Because the meanings are not transparent and readily

available, the researcher must have a sustained engagement with the text and process of

interpretation (Smith, 2003). Finlay and Ballinger (2006) describe IPA as a variant of phenomenology that attempts to explore the individual's perceptions and experiences. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis also involves a two stage interpretative process, which allows the researcher to attempt to interpret the participant's mindset during a particular activity. Described by Smith (2004) as a double hermeneutic, it is a twofold process that attempts to make sense of another's experience.

While phenomenology uncovers meaning, IPA is in agreement with Heidigger's (1962) views that "the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation" (Heidigger, 1962, p.37). "The phenomenology of Dasein is hermeneutic in the primordial signification of the word, where it designates the business of interpreting"(p.62). Hermeneutic phenomenology has descriptive and interpretative elements, which then enables an inter-subjective understanding (Standing 2009).

IPA, as compared to other forms of phenomenology tends to accept the narratives of the participants in a questioning way and interprets beliefs based on their responses (Smith et al. 2009). Interpretation and increased understanding are important in IPA and a degree of questioning is considered beneficial to the overall analysis (Smith et al. 2009). Therefore, IPA must be more firmly rooted in what they participants are saying with direct quotes used frequently to substantiate the findings of the researcher (Smith et al. 2009). By gaining insight to the individual, an understanding of the whole can occur. Smith et al. (2009) advised IPA researchers to think in terms of theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability.

There are four levels of analysis in IPA. The first is a descriptive level where similarities and differences of each participant are addressed. The second is an analysis

of information for the identification of themes and invariant themes that arise out of the data. Third is the analysis of information and bracketing of the correlates. Finally, the fourth level is analyzing information by connecting the correlates to help identify the essences of the phenomenon (Sanders, 1982).

Like other qualitative methodologies, IPA requires that multiple criteria be utilized to help build a strong foundation of credibility. Increased credibility in this study will be achieved by prolonged researcher engagement in this study topic, triangulation of data, peer review, participant information checking, clarification, and rich description (Glesne, 2006). The relationship with the study participants was very positive before, during, and after the data collection phase as evidenced by emails, texts, and responses on social media. Triangulation of data occurred through the researcher's transcription of the text, a colleague's transcription of the text, and the respondent is reading the text for accuracy. Peer review occurred as the researcher discussed the study and the preliminary findings with other high school teachers and college professors. Information checking and rich description have been used throughout this study, as they are the hallmarks of IPA.

To begin the analysis phase, the researchers reads the transcript multiple times while annotating what is significant about what the respondent said and any physical responses noted by the interviewer. The transcript is then read again, and bracketing is utilized to eliminate any preconceived ideas that the researcher has about the described experience. It is the ability to suspend personal meanings and then arrive at a new meaning. Doing this does not necessarily eliminate all personal meaning. However, it does allow the researcher to recognize it so that it is addressed early in the process to

maintain the focus on the respondent and not the interviewer. In other words, the worldview or the experience must be lifted from the landscape to analyze it alone. Moustakas (1994) states, "We suspend everything that interferes with fresh vision" (p. 86). He further suggests that the process of bracketing is purely for the researcher and is necessary to complete proper analysis that requires reflection on the part of the researcher. Personal bias must be acknowledged so that it does not interfere with the analysis, allowing for a pure view of the phenomenon and although time-consuming, provides richer, truer, data. Through IPA, participant information was analyzed for the essences of the perceptions on the following research questions:

1. What allowed students who were marginalized and outcasted to persist to graduation and beyond?

2. What psychosocial traits are necessary for students prevail against the odds?

3. How did students develop the resiliency skills needed to overcome adverse climate and culture?

Design and Events

During the first phase of the study, the researcher used the social media sit Facebook and requested those interested in the study to contact the researcher. The information was then placed on the researcher's site, the local newsletter site, and a community site. Study information included my name, the premise of the study, and the expectations of the respondent, along with the email address of the researcher. The Facebook request can be found in Appendix 4.1. Once a respondent emailed their interest in participating, an email with specific details was returned to the respondents and a meeting time and place arranged. The email can be found in Appendix 4.2. After gathering names of interested

persons, the researcher then determined the six respondents who would be utilized within the study. All former students selected attended the vocational school, all graduated from the high school, and all were known to the researcher as being considered by staff and other students as members of the "dirites". In addition, there was also a level of trust and comfort already established between the respondents and the researcher due to previous social and academic interactions. This established connection created a safe environment where mutual trust and respect allowed free and honest responses to questions. There was also no need to attempt to explain, authenticate, or legitimize their lived experience as the researcher had witnessed it first-hand.

A high-intensity digital microphone was utilized for the interviews. In addition to the recorder, consent forms, a series of questions utilized for the semi-structured interviews, and a notepad for the anecdotal notes and behavior descriptions were the only items brought to the interview.Table 4.4 references the semi-structured interview questions. Respondents chose the place and time where to meet. The respondents were very warm and friendly, and all expressed happiness at being able to discuss their experiences and help the researcher.

The second phase of the study was individual interviews and data collection. Appointments were scheduled with six individuals wishing to participate. The interviews took place in a variety of public places suggested by the respondents that were accessible to them. After the consent form was reviewed with them and signed, the respondents were interviewed. The researcher used a digital audio recorder and transcriptions were made using pseudonyms rather than real names or descriptions. Smith (2003) suggests that recording and transcribing interviews is necessary to allow the respondent to tell

their story without interruption. Without transcribing verbatim, the interviewer is then able to annotate body language and emotions. Then, when listening to the tape during transcription, the researcher can hear pauses and tone that are not present in the actual transcript. Each respondent was asked the same structured questions but not necessarily in the same order. The questions were utilized as a guide to ensure that all respondents were able to discuss the essential questions; however, each was able to discuss any other idea or topic that came to mind when the question was asked. This freedom created a more naturally conversation where respondents could freely explore their thoughts and perceptions on a wide range of topics. For example, one respondent talked about his fear of being alone and another discussed his service in the military. By using the semi-structured interview, the respondents own narratives were heard and provided rich details that added to their stories of success and resiliency.

The next phase in the process is a documentary study of the interviewer by the researcher. This process involves a description of personal information by the participant as well as a description of how the interview proceeded. The final phase of the interview process is the observation phase. During this phase, the researcher observes the participants while they describe their personal experiences. The researcher notes specific behaviors, attitudes, interactions, and body language during the interview process. All phases are vital for the first level of analysis. The attributes noted during this phase will

Method of Data Analysis

The assumption of IPA is that the research is interested in learning something specific about the respondent's psychosocial world. For this to occur, the researcher must be engaged in an interpretative relationship with the transcript. To find meaning within each

respondent's narrative, it becomes imperative that there be sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation (Smith, 2003). To accomplish this goal, the transcript is read multiple times as the data is gathered. There are four levels of analysis. Analysis begins with transforming the initial notes into concise phrases to capture the essential qualities of each response. The goal is to find phrases, which capture the essential ideas but are grounded in the specific thing said. This process is continued throughout the entire manuscript and then repeated with each remaining transcript. The entire document is treated as data. No attempt is made to omit or select particular passages for special focus. Not every statement will generate themes.

Once completed, the emergent themes are listed, and connections are determined as they appear in the transcript. This stage involves more theoretical ordering as the researcher attempts to make connections between emergent themes. Some will cluster together, and these will create superordinate themes. After clustering the emergent themes, transcription is checked again to ensure that the connections are viable and that the actual words of the respondent were used. This clustering is done manually and then run through the computer software DeDoose that extracts words and phrases from the text to create word clouds and clusters. The IPA transcribed data yielded 5 superordinate themes and 7 subthemes, which illustrated the respondents experience with marginalization as it influenced their success and resiliency. None of the respondents identified with the out-group "dirties" although all but one did admit that the group existed. All accounts make strong reference not to resiliency, but rather that they mattered to at least one significant person in their lives and that they had to work to provide for themselves as money was a struggle for themselves and their family.

Theme were not based on the rate or frequency at which the theme presented itself, but rather on the importance of the theme to the research. The subordinate and subthemes were recorded and compared. All themes were coded for frequency and importance as perceived by the respondent.

The final step of the analysis is connecting the themes to identify the essences of the phenomena. Through reflection, the researcher will reduce the number of the theme to explain why the phenomena exist as it does. As the phenomena is a lived experience, it is connected to a wide variety of other experiences. Therefore, the singular phenomena must be extracted from the whole experience, analyzed, discussed, and then placed back into the individual's frame of reference to that one particular time and place. The researcher checked through the data five times before arriving at these essences. Because the specific phenomena are intertwined with the respondent's entire lived experience, it is necessary to pull out threads of the interview and probe for meaning and themes. Once identified, they are then placed back into the entire narrative of the respondent's lived experience in order to make sense of the phenomena. Below is a listing of the essences of the phenomena after analysis.

Table 4.1: Major Themes

Ranking	Theme	Frequency
1	Mattering	700
2	Financial security	470
3	Fighting stereotypes	320
4	Success	287
5	Resiliency	287

Table 4.2: Subordinate Themes

Ranking	Subordinate Theme	Frequency
1	Support from others	590
2	Personal Responsibility	370
3	Empowered by other's struggles	232
4	Tenacity	223
5	Formal training	175
6	College prep vs useful knowledge	160
7	Work ethic	150

The following chapter will address the information found in exact and expanded form. IPA analysis moves between analysis, reflection, and synthesis to complete a full analysis of one set of perceptual data. The following chapter also contains implications for educational practice and future research.

Chapter V: Results and Discussion

Initially, I wanted to examine marginalization of white suburban youth as I had witnessed, first hand, the obvious classism and obstacles that stood in the way of many of my students. I struggled with what I should look at specifically: Why were they marginalized, how the schools could resolve the issue, what the classroom teacher could do, and how the student responded. None of these ideas seemed to be hitting on the essential question that I wanted to answer. After many changes in direction and feeling as if there was nowhere to go, I met with a professor in the department who had been recommended to me by my chair. After much discussion and his stealth interview of me, he said to me, "You do not want to know any of this. You know the answer to those questions, what you want to know is how someone who is perceived as doomed by the system can escape and succeed." He was right. The exploration of this question was the driving force to my study. The "doomed" students were almost invisible to the system as they did not help with any of the data needed for accountability within the system. In fact, in some cases, they actually "hurt" the school with their test results, absences, and poor graduation rates. These students were survivors, and while some fared better than others did, all found a way to succeed when the odds were against them.

Expectations of the Data

Having personally witnessed situations of oppression and speaking to students with concerns surrounding the student body divide, I fully expected participants to voice anger and frustration with the high school system—articulating experiences surrounding their maltreatment by peers, faculty, and family. Due to these assumptions, I anticipated that

the data would highlight a newfound feeling of safety from participants—as I expected respondents to describe how grateful they were to be out of the system that marginalized them. I was not disappointed, as all expressed some dissatisfaction with their school experience.

One participant, Mark, explained that he felt he was not properly supported by the school's staff, stating, "Guidance counselors don't look at students the way they should- too many kids go to the wayside. Not every kid is going to college." Other participants echoed this lack of support, however, noting teachers as the main offenders of this lack of support explaining, "Some teachers just did not care if we made it or not; we were just a paycheck" (Luke). In addition, Sarah argued, "They want us to learn things that we will never need. It is just not useful." Further explaining, "They were more worried about the state test-who cares what that showed? They don't mean anything in the real world."

However, it should be noted that when speaking about their vocational schools, students felt welcomed, appreciated, and supported. Luke articulated this best, arguing, "I learned more at the vocational school half time than I ever did at the high school." In this sense, while interviewees felt marginalized during their public school experience, they found their vocational institutions as places of encouragement and academic support.

Surprises from the Data

While I was expecting some negative feelings in regard to the participants' high school experience, some findings from the data did surprise me. My bias and my own disillusionment with the system did not prepare me for the way these young people were able to see their world.

I was particularly surprised that the respondents did not articulate a hatred of their high school experience. One participant, Ruth, even went so far as to state, "I liked school. I miss it sometimes." This finding makes sense upon analysis of the data. When talking about the negative experiences that respondents faced, they took ownership of their experience. Mark put it best, stating, "It is my own fault really, (that people see me that way). I just put myself in situations sometimes not thinking clearly or making a decision, or make an impulse decision, and I have to figure my way out of it." Moreover, in situations where they did not necessarily feel responsible, they were not inclined to blame the institution, but rather attributed difficult situations to the workings of the greater universe. Luke explained this mindset stating, "When it rains it pours; you just have to accept that and get over it."

I was also surprised by the tenacity exhibited by respondents. Rather than findings themselves bitter or discouraged by their experience, they found energy and purpose in their situation. Mary explained, "I don't like being on the bottom and so I have to work my ass off to get to the top." This need for an intense work ethic was echoed by Luke who explained, "My willingness to work harder than anyone else is what makes me successful. My future is up to me and no one else", again acknowledging the importance of personal accountability for members of the sample. This tenacity was also accompanied by a sense of hope amongst participants. They acknowledged the struggle that they faced and felt that they were not only adequately prepared to deal with it at the time, but also felt a sense of pride about their current trajectory and where they were headed. The majority of respondents felt that they still had room for personal growth and development and expected career growth in the future as well. Mark explained this sense

of hope, stating, "Watching my mom go back to school after all that she has been through made me realize that anything is possible." In this sense, respondents acknowledged the difficulties, but felt empowered by them, rather than doomed.

While these previous sections were my initial thoughts pertaining to the data, the extended results and discussion of the results are organized below by research questions followed by other professional topics salient for the study. As previously described on pages 38-43, the respondents were as follows:

Matthew

Matthew, 45, was eldest of the respondents. One of the first to respond to social media, he was anxious to discuss how the vocational school had helped him become successful in life. As a student, he had studied computer science and upon graduating high school joined the air force. After serving 4 years, he married, had two children, and moved to the Midwest where he lives today working for a major airplane manufacturer.

Mark

Born and raised in the small community surround the school, Mark, 27, studied mechanics at the vocational school. His mother experienced job loss several times during his schooling, and his father was also a mechanic. A member of the football, volleyball, and baseball teams, Mark describes his ability to "move in and out" of the groups at school unnoticed. A working mechanic now, he holds two full time jobs and is deeply concerned about his parents' health and happiness.

Luke

Now 23 years old, Luke had been a struggling student while in high school. Unable to pass the state standardized test until he reached the twelfth grade, Luke was placed in

remedial classes since the 10th grade. A frequent visitor at the principal's office, Luke was considered by many students and faculty to be destined for prison. He frequently had arguments with teachers over perceived lack of respect and what he saw as unfairness. After graduating high school, he joined the army and saw two tours of active duty in Afghanistan as an Explosive Ordinance Disposal Specialist.

Mary

Mary is a dark haired, quiet, reserved young woman of 21 who always took her education seriously. A valedictorian of the vocational school, Mary won awards and scholarships in the culinary arts since her junior year in high school. In addition to her extensive culinary knowledge. Working 25-30 hours a week all through high school, and an active member of the volleyball team, Mary graduated as valedictorian of the vocational school and in the top 15% at the high school. She attended a local university for three years and currently works at a well-established and respected restaurant club in the city of Pittsburgh.

Ruth

Ruth, 21, is a tall, thin, quiet young woman who worked full time all through high school. She was surrounded by addiction all during her formative years and watched two aunts and a cousin die from overdose. She attended the vocational school for medical assistance courses and is currently enrolled in a hospital nursing program where financial struggles continue to plague her and she must work two jobs while in school in order to pay tuition.

Sarah

The youngest of the respondents, Sarah is 19 years old and works as a nanny to a local lawyer. She too worked full time all throughout high school and attended the vocational

school for child development. During her junior and senior year in school, she would open the child care center at the vocational school, come to the high school for classes, and then return to the vocational school after school and work at the child care center until close. She also worked part time at a local restaurant. In addition to her vocational classes, she also attended the local community college and has an associate's degree in child development. Her original intention was to become a kindergarten teacher, but now does not want to pursue a degree.

Research Question 1

What allowed students who were marginalized and out-casted to persist to graduation and beyond?

In the original Greek etymology, phenomenon means to show itself or to put into the light (Heidegger, 1962, p.51). Phenomenology then, according to Heidegger (1962), is to "let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself (p.58). Heidegger saw the process as "making manifest that which is some sense is hidden" (Moran, 2000, p. 230). In other words, to lift the veil of invisibility and reveal what is hidden underneath. IPA recognizes this as well as the role of the researcher to make sense of the experience of the participants. Smith (2004) refers to double hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is when the participant is trying to make sense of their psychosocial world while the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their psychosocial world (p. 40).   Heidegger(1962) states: "Our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, foresight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out the fore-structures in terms of the things

themselves"(p.195). Smith (2007) urges that the researcher must be aware of their preconceptions up front before doing the interpretation so that it is the participant's experiences, perceptions being examined, and not the interviewer's. By understanding and identifying a personal bias or preconception, the interviewer is then open to the participants' views even if they differ from the interviewer.

Claude M. Steele (1997) would describe this treatment of the "dirties" as a stereotype threat and domain identification issue. This theory states that individuals from stereotyped groups are treated poorly and devalued by the dominant group and, not able to overcome this burden, do not perform as well as their non-stigmatized peers. The results of this ca be seen in the impaired performance and lower expectations of people of color in schools with diverse populations as wee as in children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This pressure can affect test performance and academic identities and is known as stereotype threat. Carr and Steele (2009) conducted a two-step study which examined how the stereotype threat affected African American males and women who experienced the effects of negative stereotypes in a university setting. It was determined that participants who were threatened by stereotypes were less likely to employ strategies that would allow them to succeed. They maintained what is described as inflexible perseverance meaning that because they innately knew of the expectations based on their gender and race, they chose behaviors that met the expectations and therefore their decision making and job performance were affected. Interestingly, if the participant did not identify with the stereotype, they did not demonstrate inflexible perseverance and were more successful. Steele (1997) explains that the key to recognizing a negative stereotype and its effects on the individual can only occur if the individual believes that it

is applicable to him or herself in a particular situation. Buber would explain this as result of the individual identifying with their oppressor and seeing themselves as unworthy- just as their oppressors do. This could explain the behavior of the students within the "dirty" group-they merely became the image created for them by the dominant group. They knew that, financially, they were not equal to the dominate group of students; however, that was the only life experience that they knew, and the seemed to accept it and view what they did have as being just as valuable-or in some instances more valuable-than those of the dominate group. They recognized the value of hard work, no indebtedness, and life skills as being more valuable than an "easy" life. Also, all participants had at least one member of their immediate or extended family who gave them support and guidance. All participants discussed the importance of the formal training and useable knowledge they received at the vocational school that aided them in gaining employment and opportunities during school and post-graduation. The vocational school mattered to them; the high school did not. They perceived the high school as frivolous while the true education came at the vocational school where what they were learning mattered in their lives and where the teachers saw their future in the same way that they did. Erikson (1968) tells us that for the adolescent acknowledgment is imperative to healthy identity development. As the participants themselves explained, there is great value in feeling as if you matter to someone else, and vital for a system to function. When these students entered the vocational school, they felt as if they belonged, as if they mattered and because of that, there was a transformation of these students. Buber (1957) refers to this as genuine meeting where the person is affirmed by another. One participant, Luke, described a high school teacher who berated them and told them they would not amount

to anything. Luke told me, "She hated us. She hated her job. She just wanted us gone."

He believed that she did not see them as individuals, but as "those kids" that she had to

endure, as she got closer to retirement. He knew that he, and none of his classmates,

mattered to her. They were invisible. They were objects with no significance. She

merely endured them and they her. However, when these same students got to the

vocational school, where they were seen and where they did matter, they could see a

future for themselves. Another participant, Sarah, described a teacher at the vocational

school who would "tell me every day that with my skills I would have no troubles getting

a great job anywhere I wanted." Mary the culinary student, told me that her vocational

teachers encouraged her to join competitions to "show off her talents" because her

culinary skills were "phenomenal".

What enabled these participants to push through their often-turbulent adolescent

years was not the high school or motivation for career and money. The true impetus was

that there was a system in place that clearly demonstrated what they had known all along;

that they mattered.

Research Question 2

What psychosocial traits are necessary for students to prevail against the odds?

Perceptions of reciprocal relationships with instructors at the vocational school

influenced not only the student achievement but also their feelings of potential success

through empowerment. Not all of the participants ever doubted their ability to succeed

while in the vocational setting that then gave them the strength to face what many

considered a waste of their time at the high school. Sarah, the student who studied child

development at the vocational school, told me, "I told my mom that I learned more at [the

vocational school] in two years than I learned for 12 years at [the high school]." This feeling of empowerment then allowed them to push forward in any situation. Also, all of them faced many challenges throughout their young lives where they needed to use this inner strength. Luke had been through two tours in Afghanistan where his job was to load and launch missiles. One day saw his squad being fired upon, and they lost four young men on the mission. He described the devastation he felt and how the bombing still haunts him. When the remaining squad returned home, the families of the fallen soldiers met them at the airport and celebrated their safe return home. They hugged them and thanked them for all that they had done for their sons who had not returned. Tearfully he said, "If they could do that…if they could find the strength to do that…then I have to find strength every day to honor them." This ability to find inner strength through the other's struggles was a recurring theme with all participants. Ruth told me about the four members of her family who had died because of overdosing. All that was left was her and her mother. When I asked her how she managed to escape a similar fate, she told me, "I saw what their lives were like and what it did to my mom. I did not want a life like that. I wanted to make my mom and grandparents proud." She continued to go to nursing school and never missed a class, even when her beloved grandfather passed. "He wouldn't want me to miss. He knew how hard I had to work because he had worked hard to make sure I got to school. He wouldn't have wanted me to miss."

In addition to inner strength, tenacity was also described by all participants. All of the participants refused to give up, even when others told them they should. This quality seemed to stem from not only their inner strength but also feeling empowered from their vocational training. One young man, Mark, discussed his inability to make a

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living wage as a mechanic. He had worked at several places at minimum wage while he continued to apply for employment that would pay him better. He was met with many obstacles and was encouraged by parents and friends to do something else. The garages and dealerships wanted him to have experience, which he could not get, as no one would hire him. He described working at two jobs and doing work "one the side" to survive. One day, a man who owned his own garage approached him and, having heard about his work, hired him and is currently grooming him to take over for him when he retires. Because of his tenacity, along with believing in himself, allowed him to push through when many others would have given up. Another participant, Mary, describes that after winning many accolades in culinary school and completing an additional year post high school at a culinary institute, she was told not to pursue high-end restaurants and clubs. She was told, "no one would hire her without experience." She refused to accept that and applied to over 50 restaurants. She was interviewed by over half and was hired at the one specific club that they had warned her about, as its head chef was "too strict and cruel". She currently works there and, although it is stressful, loves every minute. The "cruel" chef, she explains, "just has high expectations, I am used to that. I do too."

Another theme that emerged was personal responsibility. None of the participants felt entitled to "special treatment". They saw that their future was entirely in their hands. They all describe families where personal responsibility and work ethic was modeled and stressed. The participant who was a soldier, Luke, described boot camp to me. He described how physically and emotionally draining it was. I asked him how he got through it, and he replied, "I knew it was my job to get through it. I knew that if I failed the squad would fail, and that was not an option." He went on to describe how each

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member of the squad felt a personal responsibility to the others because without that dedication and personal responsibility, the safety and success of the squad were at risk. He told me that was not new to him, that he had always known that his actions had consequences that would either "make or break him". Another participant, Sarah, has bought a house at 22 years of age. As I marveled at that accomplishment, she told me, "I have been on my own since 18. I have been working since I was 16. In my house, when you are 16, you get a job, and when you are 18, you are on your own. That was just how it was." When I asked if she felt abandoned or upset by that philosophy, she responded, "It is not my parents' job to take care of me once I can do it. They have their own things to worry about. I am doing fine." In fact, all participants describe great love and admiration to their working class families and attribute much of their success to learning their work ethic from them. They all expressed that providing for themselves and their futures was their personal responsibility, and knowing that was a driving force in their day-to-day lives.

Another aspect that they all spoke about was the people they knew who had been handed college or a career from wealthy parents. They all had stories of those same students who had dropped out or were living in parents' basements with no job and mounting bills. Luke explained, "Because it came so easy to them, they threw it away." The ownership of their personal success or failure became a means of great pride and a driving force to not only their employment but in how they handled personal relationships and work relationships. Mark, the young man who was finally employed by the garage owner, knew that his future was dependent on creating a reputation for honesty and quality work. "If I don't do my job, he loses customers, then he has to let

people go, and I lose my chance at owning a shop." Ruth, the nursing student, explains, "Her mother and grandparents have given up so much for her to succeed." She knows "what kind of life I want" and will do what she has to do to make that happen. In addition to loans, she works full time at a fast food restaurant and goes to school full time in order to succeed and have that life. Their understanding that their choices matter to themselves as well as those around them has been the impetus to take personal responsibility for their lives.

Research Question 3

How did students develop the resiliency skills needed to overcome adverse climate and culture?

This answer to this was interesting. The fact of the matter is that while they all "bounced back from difficulty" and carried on with their plans and their lives, they never saw the environment as particularly adverse. Even Luke, the soldier, saw war as merely the "way it was". By not identifying with the marginalized group, they did not see high school as adverse for them. One participant, Ruth, explained, "I loved high school." Mark explained, "I did not choose to be involved there as I wanted to work to get the things that I wanted, like a car." They all described grouping while in school. They recognized the out-group but did not see themselves as part of it. Mark went on to explain that, "I played sports, and I went to vocational school, so I fit in with all of them, the jocks, the burnouts, the nerds. I floated in and out of all the groups." The narratives of the participants did not include alienation by the school as I had expected. There may have been a discussion about certain teachers, administrators, or students, but as far as the school culture, they did not recognize it as an issue. They felt that the high school was

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merely a place where they had to, as Mary described, "Get through it to get to [the vocational school]." It was "annoying" but not terrible. None of them saw themselves as more resilient or more put upon than anyone else. All participants had experienced encounters within both schools with teachers who helped them and made them feel that they mattered. Because of those encounters, the participants were able to enhance their learning and growing sense of self, which formed them into the successful adults that they are today.

Conclusion

What the narratives in this study show are that student success is not based on mere classroom performance but rather an internalized sense that they matter, and that they are more than test scores and honor roll lists. While many within the system look at some students and shake their heads while proclaiming the students' inevitable failure and doomed life, the students themselves have refused to accept that label and have proved themselves successful. While resiliency is certainly one-way to describe this phenomenon, it does not fit. The narratives of the participants indicate that they did not overcome an adverse culture. They did not feel alienated. They admitted that they were treated differently and that many students and faculty did not view their career choices as worthy. However, they saw that as happening to everyone at some point in their lives; it merely was "just how life is." Rather than resiliency, it seems to be the perception of the individual on how they mattered. The psychological research of "mattering" began in the 1980's (Rosenberg& McCullough, 1981; Schlossberg, 1989). Noddings (1988) explained that to matter to others is based on the perception of interpersonal significance and is a result of caring and being cared for. These shared spaces are described by

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Gillespie (2005) as going "beyond tangible outcomes" (p. 211). When it comes to mattering, the opposite side of the coin is marginalization. Marginalization is a phenomenon as described as the experience of feeling outside or beyond the immediate care of others. However, marginalization cannot occur when an individual has a true sense of self and sees himself or herself as mattering to others and themselves. With the empowerment that comes with mattering, they become impervious to negative encounters with others (Laing,1961). The narratives of the participants indicate they did not experience marginalization nor did they see themselves as being resilient while in high school. They all saw themselves as successful not because they had money, but because they were self-sufficient, and they had lives that made them happy. Their sense of self-worth and success, the belief that they mattered in their lives and those of others was the impetus to live lives with purpose and satisfaction.

Buber urges us to see each other holistically. For him, the only "thou" to whom one can relate to or alienated from is God. He calls on us to confirm one another's humanity by recognizing one another in their wholeness. Feelings of marginalization come out of the perception that "I do not matter" or "I do not exist" to another. However, that notion does not affect the individual who knows their worth as well as the worth of others. The purpose of the study was to explore what I perceived as alienation and marginalization. I assumed that the school culture had led to feelings of marginalization and dehumanization. However, by examining the narratives of the participants, it was clear that while they did not experience marginalization, they did have a sense of invisibility. While this invisibility was clearly felt in the high school, a sense of mattering and importance was felt at the vocational school that ultimately led to their

success after leaving both institutions. Having a clear sense of self-made them impervious to marginalization. Their fellow students who did have the same sense of self-did not fare as well leading this researcher to believe that marginalization is a result the inability for the individual to see how they matter in the world.

Discussion

The conclusions of this study were surprising to me in that I was unaware of the impact of my narrative had on my perception of the harmful effects of the school culture. Truly listening to the participants making sense of their experiences, talking through them, and arriving at their understanding, I too came to understand and reframe my experiences. As a teacher for over 27 years, I have seen many changes come and go in education. My teaching has dramatically shifted as the call for accountability has created a high-tension environment with little room for nurturing, creativity, and time for individual contemplation. We have created an environment in many schools where, to maintain funding and power, they have stopped seeing their students as individuals and instead view them as data. In the pursuit of accountability, we have lost the ethics and morality that was the charge of the school system. These narratives demonstrate the need to change the system so that the individual can see that they matter and that their struggles will eventually lead them to a successful life. The importance then of the interactions between student and teacher, or the teacher and the entire class cannot be dismissed by any stakeholder within the educational system.

Generative impacts on theory

Buber's (1957) I-Thou/I-It theory shows the relationality of the individual as it is interdependent with others. Through this interdependence, we ultimately shape and

reshape who we are as individuals. Shutz (1967) had a similar theory, We-Relationship, that focused on intersubjectivity and how we act based on meanings derived from our social interactions with others. The theoretical and empirical literature on relationality has been mostly described as conceptual or philosophical phenomena. Therefore, no discussion regarding the impact can be complete without examining, in a phenomenological setting, the individual participant narratives.

Gillepsie (2005) asserts that the experience of mattering is transformative and can enable the individual to overcome most life turmoil. Erikson (1968) believed that for young people, experiences had to be rooted in the relational acknowledgment by others to develop a healthy identity. When viewed as vital to a healthy sense of self and, therefore, an eventual healthy, functioning adult, the moral implications of relational mattering are immense.

In this sense, then this study to the scholarly literature by giving a voice to those who have been so eloquently described in the literature, but not truly a part of it. Nel Noddings (1984; 1988) attempted to do this within the framework of care orientation; however first-hand narrative material is vital to understand fully the impact of relationality, mattering, and the lived experience. While attempting to discover what allows a student to succeed in a negative environment, we can apply many theories and rationales. However, until we can hear first-hand narratives of those who have lived it, it will remain a mere theory.   Also, as the educational system continues to change and search for ways to measure accountability, this study clearly points out that the basic of all human needs and rights is being ignored. To see and be seen, to matter to others, and to be recognized merely for their humanity is what any student needs. This study then

gives voice to those whom the current system claims to be helping, but in reality are diminishing.

Implications for practice

Just as I allowed my bias to taint my perceptions of the student environment, so do most other educators. To create an environment where students feel as if they matter, as if they are being heard, educators must identify and confront their bias. This bias could be related to race, class, religion, gender, sexual identification, or choice of curricular paths. By acknowledging and confronting their own bias, they will then be more likely approach the child holistically, as Buber(1957) encouraged, mind, body, and soul. This self-reflection and introspection should be in a retreat-like environment without judgment from staff or administration on at least a yearly basis. There should then be small group discussion as to how to proceed in the classroom. Student Learning Objectives (SLO's) which are current requirements of the state could be used to help this process. In addition to student goals supported by data, why not allow personal, professional goals that could be measured through qualitative analysis. This self-reflection should also be an integral part of the induction program for new teachers to have them begin their careers understanding the need for continuous self- reflection and acknowledging the potential bias. Also, the words of the students themselves should be shared with the faculty. Student choice is imperative to any educational reform (Cook-Sather, 2006) but also presents opportunities for realistic insights regarding best practice within every classroom. The narratives of the students provide insight into their world and perceptions. The information gained from the students will help the classroom teacher, guidance counselor, and para-professional meet the needs of the students. In addressing

the needs of the students, there will be and increased feeling of mattering, and thus create a classroom environment that has far fewer confrontations and turmoil. This approach is not merely a warm, fuzzy approach to teaching, but rather such methods clearly demonstrate student success and achievement in ways that no standardized multiple-choice test can. Sharing the success journey of those students that many of the faculty perceived as "doomed", many teachers will begin to view the child holistically, thus allowing more students to achieve and grow.

There must be a fundamental change in practice in all high schools. Assuming that the only means for a solid future is college is limiting to the student and to the country. We are a nation built on tradesmen and craftsmen and we continue to need people well trained and prepared to work in all technical jobs and trades. By creating an curriculum where scheduling, lesson planning, instruction, and extracurricular activities are integrated, students will be able to achieve to their highest potential and will not be stereotyped or considered "dirties" anymore. With our economy in constant flux and college indebtedness rising, we must begin considering new options for our students. This is not a new concept; however, in most of Pennsylvania full time vocational school is a rarity. One school, in New Castle County has created a votech option for its students. According to their website, about one-fourth of all eighthgrades who attend the New Castle County Public schools choose to attend the votech highschool. With an integrated curriculum, these students thrive as they are exposed to over 1500 hundred hours of specialized technical training in their selected fields. This gives the students real life experience in a trade while allowing them to attend traditional classes and extracurriculars as part of the general student population. They are not separated from

their peers or considered unusual. Nearly 40% attend post secondary schools full-time and about 17% continue part-time (New Castle County - Vocational Technical School District). Attending an integrated tech school gives students options and a means to support themselves and their families while continuing their education or mastering their skills. That makes for a stronger student and country.

Recommendations for Further Study

As the interpretative phenomenological analysis of this study indicates, a sense of mattering is imperative for the continued success of the individual. One way to follow up this study would be to look at a different population of students not included in this current study; specifically, those students perceived as scholars or destined for achievement. Doing this would allow me to analyze their sense of mattering and perceptions of success as well as strengthen what Lincoln and Guba (1885) as transferability.

Another possibility is to include teacher perceptions as well, combining their voices to those of the students. A mixed methods approach would allow for further triangulation of the data.   Using an aggregated survey, to gain information about classroom practices, in addition to an interpretative analysis utilizing the same types of questions given to the students,   would then allow an analysis of student and teacher perspectives.   This diverse data would certainly show how conflicts regarding value and worth come to be as well as possible resolutions.

Conclusion

Before I became a teacher, I became a nurse and spent many years caring for the elderly and in hospice. I have been at the bedside of those in terrible pain from cancer and in

deep sadness from knowing they would not live to see their children grow and become whomever they were destined to become. I have looked into the empty eyes of those with dementia and have found looking back at me a flicker of the person they once were. I have seen stroke victims battle through pain and exhaustion in an attempt to become whole again. These experiences helped shape me into the woman that I am today. To those people, I was a lifeline in a sea of uncertainty and pain. I mattered to them and because of that, I had a sense of pride and was honored to be a part of their lives. As I moved to teaching, that feeling did not completely leave me. I realize that to some, my presence is important, but for the most part, the culture of the public school classroom is that we are all replaceable; none of us truly matters. However, that is not the case. Every individual must feel as if they matter-I have heard first-hand accounts of the success that is possible because of that sense of importance. I stumbled upon Buber's theory as if it were divine intervention and became acutely aware of the importance that respect for humanity plays in the world.

This educational journey has changed me in ways that I never even imagined at the start. Once perceived as a "doomed" child who was predicted to be a part of the welfare system, I found out that I, in fact, mattered. Once viewed as an object of pity, I became a person of pride. I have not seen myself this way, and so I was not able to see my students that way either. The narratives of my participants made me see this. They do not want pity. They do not expect a handout. All they want is to matter and to be treated with the respect that should be given to all human beings. This powerful and enlightening journey will affect me both professionally and personally for years to come.

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Appendix A: IRB Documentation

To: Jennifer Mann
From: Linda Goodfellow, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #2015/02/6 - Approval Notification
Date: 03/13/2015

The protocol Lifting the Veil of Invisibility, An Interpretive phenomenological analysis of student perception as related to resiliency has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on 03/13/2015.

The consent form and email flier are stamped with IRB approval and one year expiration date. You should use the stamped forms as originals for copies that you distribute or display.

The approval of your study is valid through 03/11/2016, by which time you must submit an annual report either closing the protocol or requesting permission to continue the protocol for another year. Please submit your report by 02/12/2016 so that the IRB has time to review and approve your report if you wish to continue it for another year.

If, prior to the annual review, you propose any changes in your procedure or consent process, you must complete an amendment form of those changes and submit it to the IRB Chair for approval. Please wait for the approval before implementing any changes to the original protocol. In addition, if any unanticipated problems or adverse effects on subjects are discovered before the annual review, you must immediately report them to the IRB Chair before proceeding with the study.

When the study is complete, please terminate the study via Mentor by completing the form under the Continual Renewal tab at the bottom of your protocol page and clicking on terminate. Please keep a copy of your research records, other than those you have agreed to destroy for confidentiality, over a period of five years after the study's completion.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Linda Goodfellow, PhD, RN, FAAN

IRB Chair

goodfellow@duq.edu

Appendix B: Solicitation Verbiage

Jennifer Mann
RE: Participation in research study

Good afternoon,

My name is Jennifer Mann and in addition to my role at Deer Lakes School District, I am working toward a doctoral degree from Duquesne University. Specifically, I am looking at what attributes contribute to resiliency and success after leaving high school. Because you were a graduate from the high school and while there enrolled as a new student, a vocational education student, and/or a student enrolled in general studies, your input can be very valuable to my research.

Because of this, I am asking that you take part in my research study. Your involvement will consist of you meeting with me, one on one, and discussing your experiences and opinions regarding success and resiliency in three 45-minute sessions.

There will be no monetary compensation for your time. Participation in any of the sessions is voluntary. Collected data will be held in the strictest confidence and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. Any personally identifiable information that is provided will be removed and your name will never appear on any research instrument or in data analysis.

Participation in this study involves minimal risk. Although unlikely, for some of the participants recalling past events may cause uneasiness or stress. Should this occur, the interview will be paused or postponed until a later time. While there are no personal benefits, the knowledge gained from the interviews may benefit other students at the high school level by advancing knowledge of the importance of resiliency. You are under no obligation to participate in this study and you may withdraw from participation at any time. If you do choose to withdraw, any audio recordings, consent forms, or written materials already collected will be destroyed and will not be included in the data analysis.

I thank you in advance for your participation in this study, and if you are interested, I would be happy to share the results with you once I have completed my research. To participate, please respond to this email and I will contact you to schedule our initial interview. At that time, you will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to participate in the study. Once the consent is signed, we will proceed with the first of the three interviews.

This study has been approved by the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board.

Thank you,

Jennifer Mann
Doctoral Candidate Duquesne University
English Department Head, Deer Lakes High School
Teacher, Dear Lakes High School

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 FORBES AVENUE | PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:

Lifting the Veil of Invisibility: An interpretive phenomenological analysis of student perception as related to resiliency.

INVESTIGATOR:

Jennifer Mann, MS ED.,
Doctoral Candidate Duquesne University

Mannj1@duq.edu

ADVISOR:

Dr. Fran Serenka, Ed.D,
Associate Professor and Program Director,
Educational Administration and Supervision Duquesne University 412-
396-5274
serenkaf@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in ProDEL at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE:

You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate individual perception of resiliency and success as a student who was new to the district, enrolled in vocational education, or placed in general studies. In addition, you will be asked to allow me to interview you. There will be a total of three interviews, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. The interviews will be digitally audio recorded and transcribed.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Participation in this study involves minimal risk; for some of the participants recalling past experience may cause uneasiness or stress. Should this occur, the interview will be paused or postponed until a later time. Although there are no direct benefits for you to participate in this study, you can have the satisfaction that the information you give to the researcher will increase understanding of resiliency in students and may help other students succeed in the future.

COMPENSATION: There is no monetary compensation attached to participation in the study; however, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name and any identifying information will never appear on research instruments. No identity will be made in the data analysis. Collected data will be held in the strictest confidence and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. All written materials, audio recordings, and consent forms will be stored on an external hard drive, in a locked security box, in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. All audio recorded materials will be deleted after transcribing and all transcribed material will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time. If you do choose to withdraw at any time, the audio data already collected will be deleted and any transcripts, consents, or written materials will be destroyed and will not be included in the study.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Jennifer Mann, at mannj1@duq.edu), or Dr. Fran Serenka, Ed.D, Associate Professor and Program Director, Educational Administration and Supervision Duquesne University, or Dr. Linda Goodfellow, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher's Signature   Date

Appendix D: Question Route

1. Resiliency is defined as the "ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like." Do you consider yourself a resilient person?
2. Can you recall specific events in your life that challenged you?
3. What personal attributes or people helped you to manage those events and helped to make you resilient?
4. Do you consider yourself to be successful?
5. What personal attributes help to make you successful?
6. Can you identify barriers to success or resiliency for yourself or others?

Appendix E: Member Checking Verbiage

Hello! Again, I want to thank you for your time and input for my dissertation. You have

been extremely helpful. I have attached a copy of the transcript of our conversation. If

you feel that you have been quoted in error, have more to add, or would like to discuss

something in greater detail, please let me know. If I do not hear from you by July 25,

2015, I will assume that you agree with the transcription and do not want to make

changes.

Again, thank you,

Jennifer Mann